THE WORLD OF ART SERIES

ARTS AND CRAFTS OF OLD JAPAN

By STEWART DICK

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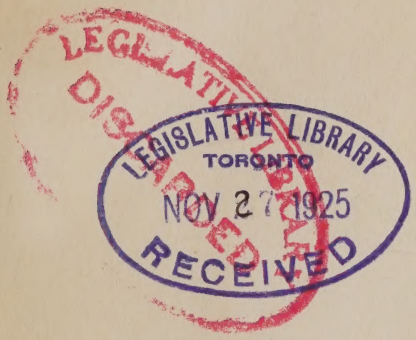
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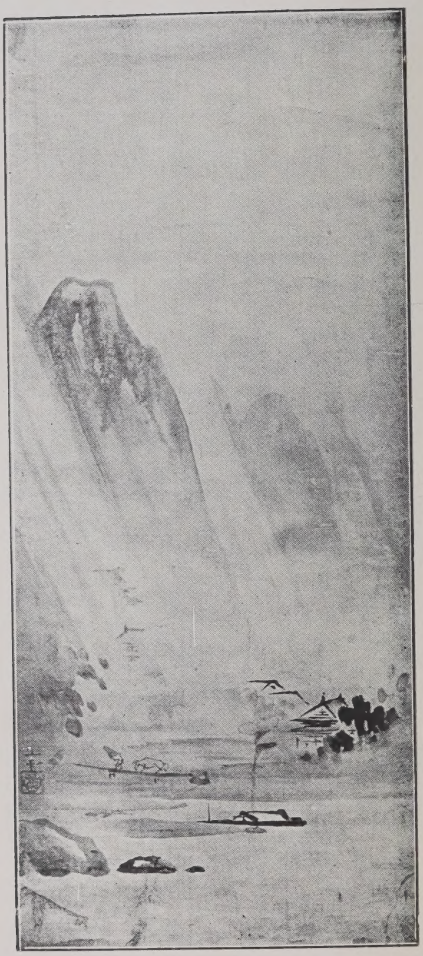

A RAINY LANDSCAPE
From a Kakemono by SANSETSU
(*British Museum*)

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Arts and Crafts of Old Japan

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STEWART DICK

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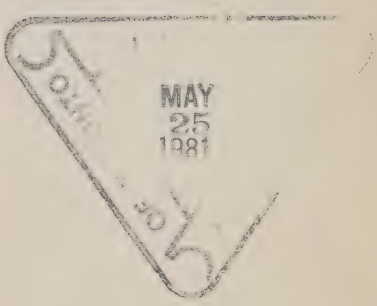

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PREFACE

This little book is intended not for the collector or the connoisseur, but merely for those who require an introduction to a field of art hitherto little explored but which will well repay further study.

For fuller information on the subject many sources are available, but a word of caution is necessary. A bibliography of works on Japanese art would be misleading rather than useful, for much of what has been written regarding it is, as criticism, quite valueless.

On Japanese painting the most important, indeed the only sound work, is contained in a series of articles contributed by Mr Arthur Morrison to *The Monthly Review*, 1902-3. The writings of Mr E. F. Strange deal fully and adequately with Colour Printing; Captain Brinkley is a good authority on Keramics, and Mr Josiah Conder on Landscape Gardening and Flower Arrangement.

The Transactions of the Japan Society contain many interesting and well-illustrated articles on Japanese minor arts, and the charm of Japanese life is nowhere reflected more pleasantly than in the writings of Sir Edwin Arnold and Mr Lafcadio Hearn.

To the custodians of public and the owners of private collections I am indebted for many courtesies, and especially to Mr M. Tomkinson, Franche Hall, Kidderminster, for permission to reproduce several of the illustrations in the sumptuous catalogue of his collection.

S. D.

October 1904.

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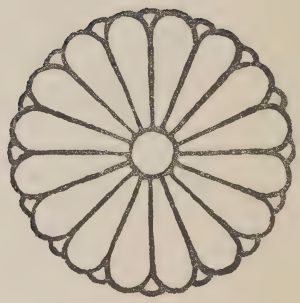

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Arts and Crafts of Old Japan

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

In coming to the study of Japanese art we must remember that we are entering a strange world, where life and language, and even modes of thought, run on other lines than ours.

When Japan, only fifty years ago, was thrown open to the Western nations, in our ignorance and folly we were at first inclined to treat the Japanese as a barbaric people. But never was there a greater mistake. For the truth is that their civilisation is not only older than ours but in some respects has advanced much further than we have ever attained. In an æsthetic sense the people of Japan are cultured to a degree far beyond our Western standards; their arts are full of beauties which are too subtle, too refined, for our comprehension.

Here, in the most civilised of all Western nations, one is dubbed a visionary and a dreamer if he hopes to see the day when the pleasures of art shall be the solace of the poor as well as the luxury of the rich. But this happy state has existed in Japan for ages. One of the chief characteristics of the people is their love for beauty both in nature and in art. On the public highways are notices indicating to the wayfarer the points from which the most beautiful prospects may be obtained. The artisan mother in the city carries her babe out into the public parks at the festival of the cherry blossom, that its infant mind may be permeated by the beauty and fragrance of the flowers.

And, loving beauty, they can also express it, for to learn to write in Japan is in itself a course of training in drawing. In art the European requires that everything should be stated with the utmost fulness of a tedious realism before he can grasp its meaning, but to the more cultured Japanese a mere hint or slight suggestion is sufficient. The leading characteristic of Japanese art is, perhaps, that it leaves so much unsaid. For the Philistine, who bulks so largely in the West, and has to be considered and propitiated

at every turn, seems to be quite unknown in Japan. What wonder, then, that, with such a public, their art should be somewhat above our heads.

Doubtless the canons of European art differ widely from those of the Far East, but these things are not essentials. All art is based on convention, in the terms of which its meaning is expressed. If we would understand Japanese art we must accept its conventions; we must learn the language of their art and see things with their eyes.

It is the fault of too many critics of Japanese art that they fail to approach it in this sympathetic attitude, and by such it is quite misunderstood. The mystic and beautiful Buddhist figures are tried by rules of anatomy, and the dreamlike Chinese landscapes by the laws of perspective. The materialist weighs the spiritual in the balance and finds it wanting.

But we seem to be improving in these matters; perhaps we are becoming more humble. Of late years some of our leading artists are beginning to acquire the qualities which Japanese art has shown so long. Who shall say that the work of such an one as Whistler, in its

sensitive feeling for balance, in its grace of line, in the unerring instinct which marks its spacing, and in the delicate harmony of its colour, is not essentially Japanese in style? Whether these qualities were knowingly borrowed from the Japanese, or whether the artist evolved them from his own inner consciousness, matters little. The important fact is that the qualities which mark the work of one of the greatest of our modern painters, and distinguish it from that of the vast body of his contemporaries, are just the qualities which for centuries have marked the art of Japan. But we know that Whistler was an enthusiastic admirer of Japanese art, and, doubtless, he would have been the first to acknowledge his debt.

With the younger school Japanese influence has been all-powerful. One might safely say that, but for the Japanese colour print, there would have been no modern poster school, working so daringly in bold outline and broad, flat tints; and recent black-and-white work is equally indebted to the Japanese woodcuts, with their beautiful, flowing line and dexterous use of solid masses of black.

The difference of mental attitude is not the

WILD DUCKS

By KORIN

(From a Woodcut in the Korin Hiakuzu)

only reason for the wide divergence in methods and ideals of Japanese art from that to which we are accustomed. There are other physical and material causes of great importance which have helped to decide its course. The basis of all pictorial and applied art is architectural, and here we find one starting-point of difference between the styles of the East and the West. The frequency of earthquakes in Japan has rendered impossible the erection of buildings of the stately proportions and massive grandeur of other climes. The old Buddhist temples, which are the chief buildings, cannot vie in importance with those of India or China.

In the Japanese house the walls are but paper screens, the whole weight of the roof being supported by the four corner posts, which, in their turn, are not sunk in the ground but stand on four large stones. This lightness of construction has to a great extent dictated the course taken by the arts of Japan. The Japanese picture, instead of being enclosed in a massive frame, is placed on a light mount of silk brocade, and when not in use is rolled up as we roll a map. And the field of applied art is similarly restricted. The temples contain most of the larger and more

important works; there is no place for such in the house. The household furniture is reduced to a minimum. A few mats to sit on, for the Japanese use no chairs; one or two paper screens dividing the house into separate chambers at will; a charcoal brazier; a few cooking utensils and articles of pottery; some lacquered vessels, fans, mirrors, and other ornaments; articles of dress, weapons, and a few personal belongings, form the whole field which is open to the craftsman.

So in Japan we have no rooms crowded with a profusion of heavy ornament. Reticence is the keynote; but what ornament there is must be of exquisite quality.

Before dealing in detail with the different branches of Japanese art it will be well to glance for a little at the history of the nation, in the light of which knowledge we shall better understand the social system under which these arts arose and the mental qualities which they embody.

The civilisation of Japan was the slow growth of many centuries. For more than two thousand years, if we may believe the ancient records, the Mikado and his forefathers have been absolute rulers of Japan, the present dynasty

stretching back in unbroken line to the Emperor Jimmu, who flourished about 600 B.C. But, as written history did not exist till some centuries after the beginning of the Christian era, the records of those early days are of a more or less legendary character, as one might surmise from the fact that the Emperor Jimmu was reported to be the grandson of the Sun Goddess herself.

The origin of the Japanese race is shrouded in mystery. Little is known of them except that, somewhere between two and three thousand years ago, they invaded Japan, and drove out the Ainos, who still survive in the island of Yezo. A Mongolian race, no one can say positively whether the invaders came from China or Korea, from the Malay peninsula or Siam, or whether, indeed, they were an offshoot from the wild Huns against whom China raised the Great Wall. One thing tending to show that they were not a branch of the Chinese race is that, even at that early date, China was the abode of an advanced civilisation; while the Japanese were certainly little removed from barbarism, and, indeed, hardly more civilised than the Ainos whom they displaced.

But the Japanese character has always been

receptive, and just as their new civilisation is borrowed from Europe, so for the foundations of the old they are indebted to China. When they first came into contact with influences from the mainland it is hard to tell. It is said that the use of Chinese characters was introduced as early as 157 B.C., and the early records give a full account of an invasion of Korea by the Empress Jingo about 200 A.D. After this victorious expedition many captives are said to have been brought back, who laid the foundations of Chinese learning and culture.

The real civilising of Japan, however, began with the coming of the Buddhist priests from Korea in the middle of the sixth century. Buddhism became the chief religion of the country, largely absorbing, though it never quite superseded, the collection of myths and superstitions known as Shintoism. For Shintoism was hardly a religion in the usual sense of the term. As a Japanese writer admits, it had no moral code; but, he adds naively: "Morals were invented by the Chinese because they were immoral people; whereas in Japan there was no necessity for a system of morals, as everyone acted rightly if he only consulted his own heart."

The chief centres of the new culture which spread over the land were the great Buddhist monasteries. Just as our own mediæval cathedrals and monasteries were the nurseries of the arts, so in Japan arose a race of artist priests. Their work at first applied solely to religious purposes, but afterwards widened out till, along with the sacred, there existed also a secular school. For three or four hundred years under these benign and mellowing influences the country grew and prospered. The quiet and peaceful times from the eighth to the tenth century especially marked a period of great literary activity, several of the most famous poets of Japan, whose writings still live in old tradition, flourishing during this period.

As time went on, however, the horizon became overcast, and from the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth centuries Japanese history is one long record of strife and civil war. The Mikado became more and more only the nominal ruler; the real power lay in the hands of the warrior nobles.

In the twelfth century arose the terrible struggle between the two rivals, the Taira and Minamoto families, each supporting its own candidate for

the throne—a war which gave to legend and story one of its chief heroes—Yoshitsuné, the Bayard of Japan.

A hundred years later Japan, for the only time in her history, had to repel a foreign invader, a huge Tartar armada threatening her shores; but, as in the case of England, the elements fought for the islanders. A terrific storm played havoc with the Tartar fleet, and of all the invading forces it is said that only three men escaped alive, and were sent home to tell the tale.

Then in the fourteenth century the bitter wars of the Ashikaga period once more bathed the country in blood.

Those long years of war set their stamp on the nation, hardened its fibre, and brought out its sterner virtues. A military class—the Samurai—arose, and these trained warriors were maintained by the local Daimios, or princes, to whom they owed feudal obedience. Bushido, the way of the warrior, a stern but lofty creed of valour and devotion to duty, became the real moral code of the nation. For the annals of Japanese knighthood are full of tales of dauntless heroism—tales still told in every cottage in Japan, and retold a hundred times in Japanese art.

In those warlike days there was little place for the gentler arts of peace. But the Buddhist temples still stood—quiet sanctuaries where, undisturbed by the turmoil and strife around them, the gentle, priestly philosophers pursued the even tenor of their way, and kept the lamp of art burning bright and clear. In the outer world the military arts alone flourished, and the sword-maker was the king of craftsmen.

In the fifteenth century, however, during a period of peace, a second wave of Chinese influence gave a new impetus to art. The Court of the retired Shogun Yoshimasa was a circle of artists and learned men, culture once more reached a high level, and one of the most brilliant periods of Japanese art began.

The sixteenth century saw a gradual consolidation of the empire. The Mikado for long had been little more than the nominal ruler, the chief power lying in the hands of the Shogun, who controlled the whole executive of the state; but the local Daimios gave little more than a mere formal submission to the central authority—each was practically absolute king in his own province. In 1603 Iyeyasu, the first of the Tokugawa Shoguns, for in his family the office became

hereditary, came into power. A man of great ability, he set himself to complete the work of subjugation which his predecessors Nobunaga and Hideyoshi had begun, and finally reduced the turbulent nobles to the state of vassals, owing feudal obedience to the Mikado. Under his wise rule the country settled down to a prolonged period of peace, unbroken for two hundred and fifty years, in which art and industry developed greatly.

The Tokugawa period, 1603-1867, especially in its earlier stages, is pre-eminently the period of the minor arts, which then reached a perfection which has not been attained before or since. The force of the nation formerly expended on war was turned into these more peaceful channels. The Daimios of the various provinces carefully fostered the local arts, specimens of which were sent yearly to the Shogun and the Mikado, and a keen rivalry existed between the different districts.

Often the local lord would establish a kiln on his private estate, where articles of pottery and porcelain were manufactured solely for his own use. In the shelter of his castle, too, the artist in metal or in lacquer worked peacefully,

FUKUROKUJIU AND CRANE

By KORIN

(*From a Woodcut in the Korin Hiakuzu*)

freed from all sordid cares. Time was no object to him, the final result everything. He had to consult no demands of popular taste, his work was always the best he could produce, and often years of labour went to the making of one perfect piece.

As time went on, however, gradually the work lost its first freshness and originality. It became richer and more elaborate but tamer and less vigorous, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century only echoed faintly its former glories. For the burden of feudalism was pressing on the country with more and more weight. The military classes, their employment gone, gradually sank into luxury and indolence; the only sign of life was the gradual rise of a more democratic feeling among the people. The later schools of painting were more or less of the nature of a revolt from the traditions of the older styles, and the art of colour printing saw the rise of a school of democratic artists.

The soil was already prepared, some change was inevitable, and the change came when the country was thrown open to the nations of the West, feudalism finally abolished, and a democratic government established in its place.

But contact with Western ideas and Western methods seemed to give the deathblow to Japanese art. In painting the European standards have played havoc with the charming and beautiful conventions of old Japan. Aniline dyes have spoilt the soft harmonies of the colour prints. In metal, in carving, and in lacquer the new work is vastly inferior to the old. What the European market clamoured for was not quality but cheapness, and so, adaptive as ever, the Japanese turn out by the hundred superficial and mechanical imitations of the beautiful old work. Modern commercial methods have little to do with art, and in this case seemed at once to turn the artist into a trader.

Japan is now a modern nation, Western in its civilisation, in its methods, and seemingly in its ideals—destined to become a great industrial state. Perhaps, as she has done so often before, she may absorb the new influences, and without loss of individuality follow out her own course. Perhaps, phœnix-like, from the ashes of the old, new arts as brilliant may arise. But, again, some say that art belongs only to the more youthful stages of the world, and that in these

days of science never again can the artist be more than a mere survival of an earlier age—one who still keeps green within him the youth which in others has long since withered and died.

CHAPTER II

PAINTING

In a general survey of the arts of Japan it will be best to begin with the art of painting. In a land of paradoxes there is this paradox regarding Japanese art, that while their pictorial art is the most decorative of all pictorial arts, yet their decorative art is the most pictorial of all decorative arts. For the Japanese decorative artist rarely or never uses ornament merely as ornament; it almost invariably represents something more than mere beauty of line, mass, or colour; there is usually some pictorial motive attached. The lacquerer, for instance, rarely uses purely conventional forms, but flowers, birds, figures, even landscapes, make up his schemes of decoration. It follows, then, that the decorative arts of Japan are dominated by, and indeed are based upon, its pictorial art, and, therefore, the necessary preliminary to their consideration is a study of the art of painting.

The European's introduction to the study of Japanese art is apt to be rather misleading, for in all probability the first specimens which come under his notice are the colour prints and paintings of the naturalistic and decorative schools of the last century. His first shock of surprise overcome, for both the medium and the style of presentment are new and strange, he speedily discovers in them real beauties. Harmonies of line and colour, finer and more subtle than any we have to show, arouse his enthusiasm, and he thinks that he has penetrated the mysteries of Japanese art, and that all its treasures lie before him. Even were it so the boon would be no small one; but, as a matter of fact, he merely stands upon the threshold. The real glories of Japanese painting are the works of hundreds of years ago. As well could one judge of the glories of English literature from the ephemeral periodicals of the day as of the painting of old Japan from the products of the more materialistic schools of recent years. To know English literature one must read the classics; to realise its full glory we must go back to Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. And so with Japanese art, we must go back to the

works of the old masters—to Cho Densu with his amazing power, to Sesshiu with his wonderful dream landscapes—ere we realise its grandeur. Then we feel that, beautiful pieces of decoration though the modern works are, here we breathe a purer and a finer air; we are in another world, a nobler and a greater one. The finest landscapes in the world are those painted by the old Chinese and Japanese artists; monochromes, slight and shadowy as morning mist, but breathing the very poetry of nature.

The art of painting was borrowed by Japan from China, the first teachers being the Buddhist priests who crossed over from Korea in the sixth century. This origin, and also the nature of the materials used in the art, stamped it at the outset with qualities which have ever since distinguished it. The ordinary instrument for writing in China and Japan was the brush, dipped in Indian ink, and to form the native characters was in itself an exercise in drawing. Caligraphy, indeed, as penmanship in the old days of mediæval Europe, was reckoned as one of the fine arts; or rather, from the Chinese point of view, painting was reckoned one of the branches of caligraphy. This caligraphic basis

ARHAT AND LION

From a Kakemono by Cho Densu

(*British Museum*)

is the root of most of the conventions of Chinese and Japanese painting, and in the quality of the brush work are to be discovered many of its beauties. For by means of line alone, not a pen line, thin and hard, but the supple, swelling line of the brush, the artist not only renders the outlines and shapes of things but suggests modelling, chiaroscuro, even the different planes of distance, in a manner indefinable in its subtlety. Colour, except in the later and more naturalistic schools, is used in flat tints only. This absence of chiaroscuro is often quoted as a defect of Japanese art; but if all that can be said has been expressed by line why add light and shade? One has only to study the work of one of their masters in the use of the brush, such an one as Motonobu, of the Kano school, to understand not only how unnecessary it would be but how impossible. We would as soon wish to see filled in one of the exquisite outlines of Flaxman. It is like setting a beautiful poem to music: you may exchange one melody for another, but both cannot exist together. And we must remember that all use of line is a convention, for line does not exist in nature, and Japanese art, after all, only differs in this

respect from European art in having used this convention with greater freedom and more consummate mastery.

The simplicity of the means at the artist's disposal—a brush or two, Indian ink, a few liquid colours, and a sheet of paper or silk—tended to produce directness and simplicity of effect, and this tendency was increased by another influence. The Buddhist priests, then as now, were of a type of mind essentially idealistic. Their religion taught them to regard the spiritual essence of things as the great fact and the outward and visible world as merely a temporary and changing phase, and so in their art, for they were the first painters, they aimed not at a literal transcription of nature but at an expression of its inner significance. And this training has always affected the attitude of Japanese art. Directness, reticence, and restraint are its main characteristics. To present the essential quality of a scene, not its mere outward appearance, and that with the least possible obtrusion of the material, was its object.

Even in later days, in their more naturalistic studies, the Japanese artist never dreamt of drawing direct from nature as we do. His

system, the system by which children still learn to draw in Japan, was to look steadily at the object to be depicted until it was learned by heart and could be reproduced at will.

In painting the artist seats himself on the floor, the sheet of silk or paper before him. For a while he gazes abstractedly, till the whole picture is clear to his mental vision. Then with the first touch the central point of interest—the eye of a bird, say—is indicated. Swiftly and surely, with a full brush, the rest of the subject is filled in. There is no niggling, no retouching, for the delicate, absorbent surface of the silk will not stand repeated workings. Each stroke is placed on the picture direct as it is to remain, and, though the result may be a masterpiece, the work, in many cases, is that of a few minutes. The technique of the brush has, indeed, been carried to a degree of perfection by the Japanese artist otherwise unheard of. He fills it, or it may be in the case of a large brush each part of it, with just as little or as much ink or colour as he desires, carefully arranges the hairs in a certain way, for the preparation and loading of the brush is often as important as the actual brush stroke, and then with one single sweep

obtains the whole effect he requires. Many are the wonderful tales of the feats which the old masters could perform with one stroke of the brush.

A word may here be said as to the forms which pictorial art assumes in Japan.

The first and most common form is the kakemono, or hanging picture, formed of a sheet of silk or paper, richly mounted on brocade of various colours. It is furnished with rollers like a map, and is rolled up tightly when not in use. This is bad for the surface of the painting, cracks being inevitable if much body colour has been used, but it is a great protection against the fires which are so frequent in the light wooden houses of Japan; for, as there is a considerable space between the picture and the top of the mount, several layers of brocade and tough mounting paper are thus tightly wound round the painting.

The two ribbons, which so pleasantly break the monotony of the upper part of the mount, are not merely ornamental. When the moving screens forming the side of the house have been moved back for coolness, and the kakemono hangs in the open air, the *futai*, as these

AN IMPRESSIONIST LANDSCAPE

From a Makimono by SESSON

(*British Museum*)

ribbons are called, flap in the breeze, and prevent birds from alighting on the upper roller.

The makimono, or horizontal roll, is largely used for historical scenes or for landscape sketches, the series, many feet long, often forming one continuous composition. It is not hung up but laid on the floor, and unrolled and examined bit by bit, as we would look at the pictures in a book. Originally the kakemono was exclusively used for sacred, and the makimono for secular, subjects, but this distinction has long since ceased to exist.

A third form, gaku, is stretched on a frame, after the manner of our pictures, but is little used.

Screens, both folding and sliding, were greatly used for the longer and more important pictures. Sometimes a screen of five or six panels will be so treated that while the whole forms one composition yet each panel taken separately also forms a complete picture. Books, each page stiff and opening on a hinge like a miniature screen, are also used. Lastly, mural decorations on wood or plaster, and the dainty little paintings on fans, complete the forms of pictorial art most in vogue in Japan.

Some time about the end of the fifth or the

beginning of the sixth century the Buddhist priests crossed over from Korea, and formed the first Japanese school of painting, devoted almost entirely to the sacred subjects which were used to decorate the Buddhist shrines. Very beautiful and dignified are many of these old Butsugwa paintings, recalling in their rich, full colour and their lavish use of gold the illuminations and early paintings of our European monasteries. In most cases they are unsigned, the holy man deeming it unfitting that objects intended for such sacred uses should be contaminated by earthly associations. The British Museum collection contains several fine specimens, which, though faded and sadly blackened with incense fumes, show these early works worthy to compare, for elevation of tone and religious fervour, with the finest works of Christian art.

For many years this Buddhist school of painting continued, its traditions lasting without a break until the fifteenth century. And here at the outset it will be well to call attention to a difficulty which arises in any attempt to give a brief and clear account of the history of painting in Japan. The matter is complicated by the fact that, though the different schools of painting

are evolved one from the other, the later did not supersede the earlier form, but usually both continued to exist contemporaneously. Many artists painted in the styles of more than one school, the manner often being decided by the choice of subject, and latterly it was part of the training of Japanese artists to go through all the schools.

Then, again, some of the greatest masters, especially those of the last two centuries, formed their styles by adopting and combining what appeared to them best in each school. To follow out logically the growth of the various schools, and at the same time to treat of the different artists in a chronological order, is, therefore, a matter of some difficulty.

The oldest picture in Japan of which there is any authentic record was painted, probably by a Korean priest in the beginning of the seventh century, on the plaster wall of the Buddhist temple Horiuji at Nara, a storehouse filled with treasures of ancient art. For three hundred years little more is known—the names of a few priests and one or two priceless paintings are all that remain; but by the ninth century civilisation had reached an advanced stage, the country was rich and prosperous, and entered into a great literary

and artistic epoch. The poets Narihira and Komachi, still ranked among the immortals, were contemporaries of Kosé no Kanaoka, the first great secular painter of Japan, and, if the double evidence of popular legend and the verdict of critics and artists of his own and later days is to be believed, the greatest of all Japanese artists. About a dozen examples, said to be by Kanaoka, exist, but, one by one, the genuineness of each has been questioned by experts. Perhaps the most authentic is the portrait of Shotoku Daishi at the Ninnaji temple in Kioto, which has been reproduced in colours in the *Kokkwa*, the Japanese Government publication. Although nearly all the existing pictures attributed to him are Buddhistic figure pieces, Kanaoka's popular reputation was based on his paintings of secular subjects, portraits, landscapes, and animals. He was especially famous as a painter of horses.

The story goes that in a certain temple hung a painting by Kanaoka of a magnificent black steed. The peasants in the neighbourhood were much annoyed by the ravages of some wild animal, which nightly raided their gardens, eating the herbs and trampling the flowers. At last they lay in wait, and found to their surprise that

SHORIKEN CROSSING THE SEA ON HIS SWORD

From a Kakemono by MOTONOBU

(*British Museum*)

the intruder was a huge black horse. On their pursuing it disappeared into the temple, but when they followed the building was empty. As they stood below the picture great drops of sweat fell down, and there was Kanaoka's horse all hot and steaming. Then one of them had a happy idea. Seizing a brush he rapidly painted in a rope tethering it to a post, and the gardens were no more invaded by the nocturnal visitor.

The work of the immediate followers of Kanaoka seemed to be chiefly Buddhistic in style, but this may only mean that the only specimens which have survived the ravages of time are those sacred pieces which were safely stored in the temples, and that, like Kanaoka, they were equally at home in secular subjects.

In the tenth century Kasuga no Motomitsu founded the first purely native school, called the Yamato school, which afterwards, under the name of the Tosa school, became the recognised style for the treating of historical subjects.

The eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries formed a period of great literary and artistic activity. Buddhism was then in the height of

its power, and there is no greater period than this in the history of Japanese art, but of these old masters we know little more than the names. In the twelfth century we have Takuma Shoga, Sumiyoshi Keion, and Toba Sojo, the last a marvellous animal painter, but examples of their work are practically unknown out of Japan. In the thirteenth century we have Fujiwara no Nobuzané, of whose Buddhistic work the British Museum has a fine specimen; and a hundred years later Kosé no Korehisa, renowned as the greatest military painter of Japan.

In 1351 was born a truly great artist, Meicho, or Cho Densu, whom some rank as the equal of Kanaoka himself. A Buddhist priest, he was famed for his sanctity, and the bulk of his works are of a religious nature, to which field he did much to bring new life and vigour, for the school had relapsed into the dull repetition of cut-and-dry formulas. But in secular subjects he was equally great. The British Museum is fortunate enough to possess a masterpiece by Cho Densu—a figure of an Arhat seated with a lion at his feet. The whole picture is presented with extraordinary force. The attention is seized and held by the eyes of the figure

as they stare fixedly at the lion, which, with head thrown back and gums bared, glares savagely in return. The drawing is superb in its easy power, the colour rich and sombre, its highest note in the bright red of the lion's jaws.

A new influence arose with the Chinese renaissance of the fifteenth century, and we come to the times of the great landscape painters. Nothing could be further removed from the attitude of the modern European landscapist than that of these old Chinese and Japanese masters. Their object was not to depict a scene in a naturalistic manner but to convey its inmost spirit. In speaking of a painter of a later day a Japanese critic writes: "But in his landscape there is less success, as he was so particular about ensuring correctness of forms that they were lacking in high ideas and deep spirit. For a landscape painting is not loved because it is a facsimile of the natural scene but because there is something in it greater than mere accurate representation of natural forms, which appeals to our feelings, but which we cannot express in words." It is this deeper and inner art which the old landscapists give

us. In monochrome, or with a few sombre tints added, they suggest the beauty, the repose, and the dignity of nature in a way that, to my mind, no landscape painters have done before or since. One little Chinese landscape especially lingers in my memory, though it was not the original I saw, only one of the delicate collotypes which can only be produced in Japan. It was called "The Evening Bell." On the strip of soft, brown-tinted silk is faintly touched a range of peaks against the sky; nearer is a grove of trees. Mist lies in the hollows and softens the forms, and in the distance, amid the tree-tops, peeps out a temple roof. Nothing could be slighter or yet more complete.

The old Chinese style, so strongly marked in the work of the old painter priests, had gradually fallen into disuse before the more popular Tosa style, when Josetsu, a Chinese painter, settled in Japan early in the fifteenth century. Little is known of Josetsu's own work; but his influence soon began to make itself felt, and he gathered round him a band of pupils. Of these the most famous is Shiubun, a Buddhist priest, still regarded as one of the greatest of Japanese landscape painters. The British Museum con-

A LANDSCAPE IN THE CHINESE STYLE

By SESSHIU

(*British Museum*)

tains a very fine painting attributed to him, though expert criticism rather inclines to assign it to a somewhat later period.

Shiubun had two brilliant pupils, Oguri Sotan and No-ami, the first a priest, a fine landscapist, and a wonderful painter of birds and flowers; the second a brilliant and versatile man of the world, courtier, poet, caligraphist, critic, and painter. In the last capacity he was especially renowned for his paintings of tigers. No-ami had a son Gei-ami and a grandson So-ami, both of whom, especially the latter, became famous landscapists of the Chinese school.

But the most famous of all the masters of the Chinese renaissance is Sesshiu, born 1420, died 1506, one of the greatest of all Japanese painters. As a youth he entered a Buddhist temple, but his thoughts were often far away from his religious duties. The story goes that once, as a punishment for some fault, he was tied to a pillar of the temple. With tears for ink, and using his toe as a brush, he sketched some rats on the floor, and as each was completed it sprang up, and began to gnaw through the rope that bound him. On the approach of the chief priest they scampered away; but the good

monk was so impressed by the miracle that the youthful artist was henceforth allowed to follow his own bent.

At the age of forty Sesshiu, satisfied that he had learned all he could from the artists of his native country, went to China to study under the masters there, but to his surprise and discouragement he found none there who could teach him more than he already knew. Then said he: "Nature shall be my teacher; I shall go to the woods, the mountains, and the streams and learn from them." So for some time he travelled in China painting and studying nature. His fame soon spread through the land, and the Chinese artists, frankly acknowledging him as their master, came to him for instruction. By the Emperor himself he was commissioned to paint a series of panels on the walls of the palace at Pekin, and on one of these, to mark his Japanese origin, the artist has placed a view of Fujisan.

It is by his landscapes that Sesshiu is best known, and never was the grandeur and the dignity of nature more fully expressed; but his figure subjects, notably the magnificent painting of Jurojin, the god of longevity, reproduced in

the *Kokkwa*, and, in the British Museum collection, a wonderful study of Hotei, the god of contentment, frolicking with some children, must be seen before his full scope and great power can be realised. For he was in every sense a great painter; in each department his work is marked by lofty conception, great breadth of treatment, and an absolute certainty and ease of execution. His brushwork is very distinctive, and even by the novice may be recognised at a glance. Strong and vigorous, but angular and jagged like forked lightning, it often seems rude and clumsy when examined closely, but it never so asserts itself when we step back and look at the *picture*, but expresses exactly the effect intended. The British Museum possesses several very fine specimens of Sesshiu's work. Even with the most famous of his pupils—Shiugetsu, Sesson, and Keishoki—space will not permit us to deal. Mention must be made, however, of a makimono by Sesson. It consists of eight views in monochrome roughly dashed off. Nothing could be more sketchy than the treatment or yet more vigorous. It is a veritable *tour de force* of caligraphic impressionism.

A secondary result of the Chinese renaissance

was the foundation of the Kano school, which, based on the broad, caligraphic methods of the Chinese masters, gradually adapted them to their own use, evolving a freer and looser style of handling distinctly Japanese. The founder of the school was Kano Masanobu. When the artist Oguri Sotan died, in 1469, he was engaged in the decoration of the walls of the temple of Kinkakuji at Kioto, and, on Sesshiu's recommendation, Masanobu, then only known as an amateur, was engaged to finish the work.

Masanobu's son Motonobu was even more famous, and to him is due the credit of forcing the new school into public favour. Born in 1477, in his youth he wandered over the country, carrying little but his brushes, painting everything he saw, and paying his way with the results. But those lean years of poverty and study stood him in good stead. Fortune smiled at last, and he became the most popular painter of his day. Go-to Yujo, the famous metal worker, adopted his designs for sword ornaments, his painted fans were chosen as ceremonial gifts to the Mikado and Shogun, and, to crown all, Mitsushigé, the head of the exclusive and aristocratic Tosa school, gave him the hand of his

daughter in marriage. He died, full of years and honours, in 1559. For landscape, birds, and figure subjects he is equally famous, and as a master of the brush he is unsurpassed. In the work of the Chinese schools the quality of line, though often striking, is used in a more reticent way, entirely as a means to an end; but in the Kano school the line becomes a thing of beauty and life, almost an end in itself. The astonishing power and sweep of Motonobu's line may be seen to perfection in the Shoriken in the British Museum.

During the sixteenth century the Kano school numbered many famous names. Yeitoku, a grandson of Motonobu, became the favourite painter of the Shogun Hideyoshi. Kaihoku Yusho was noted for his beautiful misty effects; and more famous, perhaps, than either is Kimura Sanraku. Sanraku was at first a page in the service of Hideyoshi, who, discovering his talent, sent him to study under Yeitoku. His work has all the dash and swing of the Kano style, and his colouring is rich and harmonious, while his line is almost worthy to rank with that of Motonobu. Sanraku's adopted son Sansetsu carried on the tradition of the family, though

his work has more of the restrained quality of Sesshiu and his followers than the dash of his more immediate predecessors. The British Museum has a beautiful rainy landscape by Sansetsu, slight in treatment—only some dim hills drenched in misty rain, with the suggestion of a bridge and a stream and a fisherman's cottage—but everything, even the cottage roof, looks wet. (See frontispiece.)

In the beginning of the seventeenth century the Kano school took a new lease of life with the advent of the three brothers, grandsons of Yeitoku, Tanyu, Naonobu, and Yasunobu.

Of the three, Tanyu is the most famous, and is recognised as one of the greatest masters of the Kano school. He is distinctly a painter's painter, and delights in what we should call fireworks. Handling his brush with careless ease he makes a smudge, a few blots, and a swirl, and behold a landscape! A very Japanese Whistler; but it marks the difference between the two publics that, while Whistler is with us still "caviare to the general," the Japanese substitute is one of the most popular of all their painters. His two large pictures of Kwannon, however, in the British Museum, stamp him as no

KWANNON, THE GODDESS OF MERCY
From a Kakemono by TANYU
(*British Museum*)

mere swaggerer but a great and serious artist. In the private collection of Mr Arthur Morrison are two magnificent sixfold landscape screens, which show him to rank with the first of Japanese landscape painters, and, among other unique examples of his work, a dainty little study of birds and convolvulus, touched with the utmost lightness and delicacy.

Naonobu, the second brother, died at an early age, and from this cause, and from the fact that he seemed to spend much of his time in hunting out and destroying his earlier work, his paintings are rarer than Tanyu's. There could hardly be a greater contrast than the work of the two brothers—the first exulting in its strength, and full of a superb recklessness and dash; the second restrained and quiet, though not lacking in force, and full of a soft, liquid quality. Some charming examples of his work are in the British Museum.

The third brother, Yasunobu, was known chiefly for his landscapes, full of delicacy and feeling, and recalling the work of Sesshiu and Sansetsu.

Naonobu's son Tsunenobu, born in 1636, was a worthy successor, and, in the opinion of many, is worthy to be ranked with Tanyu and the other great men of the Kano school.

Then we have one of the most striking personalities among Japanese painters—Hanabusa Itcho, the last of the great Kano painters. A born humorist, his faculty for practical joking was always getting him into trouble. Indeed, on more than one occasion he found himself in prison owing to liberties he had taken in the pictorial representation of those in high authority. But he is no mere caricaturist. His drawings are pictures first and humorous afterwards, and as a colourist he ranks high even in Japan.

Another pupil of Yasunobu was Sotatsu, one of the greatest flower painters of Japan. He also studied under Sumiyoshi Jokei, a Tosa painter, but can hardly be classed with either of these schools.

It must not be supposed, however, that with the coming of the Sesshiu and Kano schools the old Tosa style had been driven out. It continued to exist alongside the newer schools, and many artists changed from one style to the other according to subject. The Tosa school at this time was distinguished by a minuteness of detail, and also by a richness of colour which gradually came to affect the Kano artists, whose work became much brighter in colour as time went

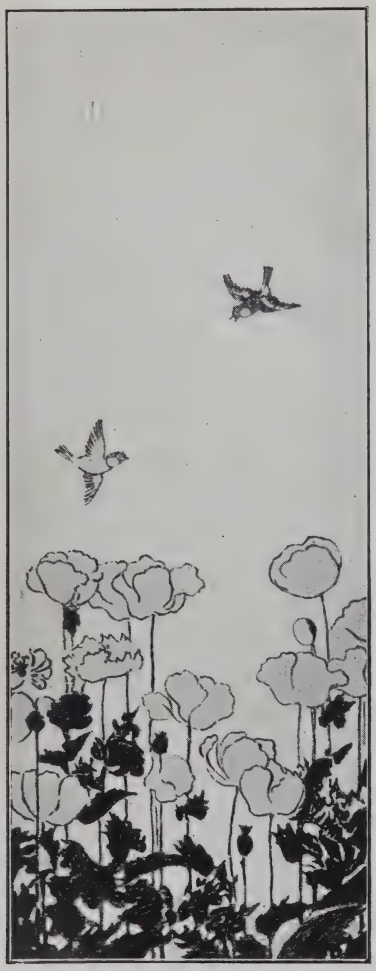
BIRD AND PINE BRANCH
From a Kakemono by NAONOBU
(*British Museum*)

on. Sesshiu, Masanobu, and Motonobu worked chiefly in monochrome, using colour sparingly; but Sanraku's work, a hundred years later, is full of fresh, bright tints. A curious convention of the Tosa painters in their historical subjects was to leave out the roof of a house in order to expose the interior to view.

We now come to Ogata Korin, one of the most individual of all Japanese artists. Born in 1661, he is said to have studied under Yasunobu, and the influence of Sotatsu seems to appear in his work; but he can be classed with no existing school, striking out an entirely new line for himself. A wonderful draughtsman, Korin possessed in the highest degree the Japanese faculty for spacing and balance. Slight and often almost bizarre, as his compositions are, one feels that it would be impossible to alter a line. He is more frankly decorative than any of his predecessors, and is even more famous as a lacquerer than a painter. Indeed, often in his painting, especially in the enamel-like quality of his colour effects, one sees the hand of the lacquerer rather than the painter. Japan, perhaps, possesses one or two greater artists, but none more original, or whose work exercises

a more subtle fascination. To commemorate the centenary of his death his follower Hoitsu issued several volumes of woodcuts from the master's designs. Slight as these are they are never trivial, nothing is expressed but what is necessary, the non-essentials are absolutely ignored, and the results are masterly in their telling arrangements of black and white.

We must now retrace our steps a little and return to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Iwasa Matabei founded the style which was known as the Ukioyé, or "pictures of the passing world" school, and which soon became the great popular school of painting. The distinction between the Ukioyé and the older classical schools, however, was not one merely of subject. Many of the earlier men had turned to the scenes of everyday life for their subjects. Toba Sojo, Sanraku, and Itcho, to name but a few, and, on the other hand, the Ukioyé painters, frequently treated of classical subjects. The real difference is one of treatment, not of subject, and the starting-point of variance was the mental attitude of the painter. It was a departure from the subjective attitude of the older men. The Ukioyé and later schools took the standpoint of



FLOWER PANEL

By KORIN

(From a Woodcut in the Korin Hiakuzu)

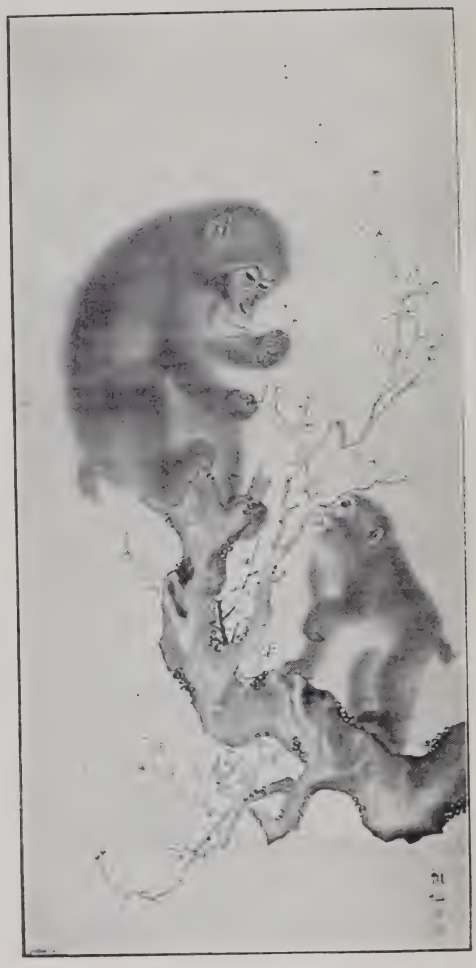
the poet: "The earth—that is sufficient; I do not want the constellations any nearer"—and their works are frankly decorative or frankly naturalistic. Materialists, in a sense, they turn from the beauties of the ideal world to show us the beauties of the natural world around us. This does not necessarily mean that their treatment was what we term realistic; but, while with the classical schools one looked through the picture, as it were, to the thought beyond, in this case one looks at the picture for the beauty which it presents, and which is inherent in the subject itself. The fact that the rise of the Ukioyé school was more or less a popular revolt against the old classical traditions which had governed the art for a thousand years will help to explain to us why its masters were hardly esteemed as highly by the cultured classes in Japan as, by their undoubtedly fine qualities, they deserved to be. On the other hand, we must admit that they never attain to the power and dignity of the older schools.

The works of Matabei are excessively rare. He was a fine draughtsman, his figures of dancing girls being particularly graceful in line and of quiet, harmonious colouring.

The next great artist of the school was Hishigawa Moronobu, who flourished during the latter part of the seventeenth century. Formerly a designer of embroideries, the inexhaustible fancy with which he adorns the costumes of his figures adds a special charm to his work, and his drawing of the figure is marked by a wonderful lightness and grace. He was the first artist of importance to devote himself to the production of the woodcut prints which afterwards attained such popularity, and during the next two hundred years became a separate branch of art industry.

During the eighteenth century the school obtained many adherents, whom, for lack of space, we can do no more than name. Torii Kiyonobu, the first of the Torii artists, noted for their treatment of theatrical subjects; Miyagawa Choshun, Nishikawa Sukenobu, Okumura Masanobu, Nishimura Shigenaga, and Suzuki Harunobu are but a few. But as most of these painters of the Ukioyé school were more famous as producers of colour prints we shall leave their further consideration to the next chapter.

A great painter of the eighteenth century who did not follow the Ukioyé or older schools, but, like Korin, struck out a line of his own, was Tani



MONKEYS AND PLUM BLOSSOM
From a Kakemono by Sosen
(*British Museum*)

Buncho, who was born in 1763 and died in 1841. As a painter of landscapes, figures, birds, and flowers he was equally a master.

Another artist who struck out for himself is Maruyama Okio, 1733-1795, sometimes regarded as the founder of the Shijo or naturalistic school. According to the old critics, "the art of painting may be pursued according to either of two systems: the one in which the spirit of nature is expressed; the other in which its outward forms are copied." Okio broke away from the old traditional method, and instead of endeavouring to interpret Nature endeavoured to so present Nature that she should deliver her own message. His favourite subjects were birds, fish, and flowers, and in their naturalistic treatment are more akin to European work than that of his predecessors, though in grace and elegance they are still essentially Japanese.

In the hands of his followers the Shijo or naturalistic school soon became popular. Even more famous than Okio was Mori Sosen, 1747-1821, now recognised as one of the world's greatest animal painters. He is especially noted for his paintings of monkeys, whose habits he studied for years, often living in the woods for months

at a time. He has two styles: one rough and bold, generally on paper; the other on silk, and often of extraordinary delicacy and fineness. That his abilities were not by any means confined to the depicting of monkeys may be seen from his exquisite studies of deer and other animals.

To landscape Mori Ippo applied the principles of the Shijo school, employing a much more naturalistic colouring than had hitherto been the custom, and Hoyen depicted birds, flowers, and insects with charming delicacy and refinement.

In 1749 was born another great independent artist—Ganku, who founded a school of his own, combining with the naturalism of the new something of the suavity and dignity of the older styles.

Though treating of him more fully in the next chapter mention must be made here of the great Hokusai—in Whistler's words, "the greatest pictorial artist since Vandyke." To European ears his name is more familiar than that of any other Japanese artist. As a draughtsman he ranks with the very first, and as a painter his brushwork was bold and free and often masterly, though lacking just the grace and finish of the old Kano masters, and, at its best, his colour is superb. Some of his

A PEACOCK

From a Kakemono by IPPO

(*British Museum*)

figure subjects have the grandiose quality of a Velasquez. His versatility was extraordinary, every style of subject coming within the range of his brush.

Of nineteenth-century painters the greatest is Kikuchi Yosai, the last of the great painters of Japan. In his youth he studied in all the schools, and afterwards made a tour through the country studying the great pictures stored in the various temples. His own style is strongly individual, combining the dignity of the older schools with the realism and rich colouring of the modern. A fine example in the British Museum is his painting of Fukurokujiu, the god of longevity—an old, old man with worn, wrinkled features. It is said to be a portrait of the artist, and was painted in his eighty-fifth year. He had many pupils but no successors; and on his death, in 1878, the only painters worthy of mention are Zeshin, better known as a lacquerer, who died in 1891 ; and Kawanabé Kiosai, a humorous draughtsman of remarkable dexterity, who died in 1889.

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CHAPTER III

COLOUR PRINTING

The art of colour printing, which, as pointed out in the previous chapter, was an offshoot of the Ukioyé school of painting, is one of the most interesting of the minor arts of Japan. It was the colour prints that first aroused the interest of the European in Japanese art, and it is from them that in most cases he still receives his first impressions. And though, indeed, these impressions require largely to be corrected in the light of further knowledge, yet on the whole this is the most natural introduction; for, fantastic though these prints may at first appear to the unaccustomed eye, yet in their frankly decorative feeling they approach more nearly the Western standpoint than the earlier and more ideal schools of Japanese art. In the colour prints, which we may buy for a few shillings, there are obvious beauties of line, of composition, and of colour which cannot fail

to appeal to us; however strange or bizarre they may otherwise appear we at once recognise them as charming pieces of decoration.

And though on further acquaintance with the subject of Japanese art we find that those who produced this beautiful work were but the journalists of art, and that the real classics stand on another and higher plane, yet on their own merits we cannot grudge them unstinted praise. They have not the noble elevation of the old schools, they do not climb the misty heights of the ideal, but they realise with exquisite feeling and refinement the beauty of the passing world that lies around them.

And while Japanese paintings, especially of the older schools, are almost unknown except to the connoisseur, and are only to be seen in a few isolated collections, the colour print is more or less familiar to all who take an interest in matters artistic. Hardly a studio but possesses a print or two, and it would be difficult to over-estimate their influence on the work which goes on around them.

But the art of the colour printer has this additional interest for us: it was a truly democratic art, its followers men of the artisan

class, its customers the common people. And at a time when the upper classes of society were suffering from a gradual degeneration, when the arts became less and less alive and more and more a repetition of outworn conventions, this growth from below of a school of living art shows that the popular masses were beginning to stir, and that even two hundred years ago the bonds of feudalism were getting weaker, and the growth of a popular art was only one manifestation of the tendencies which finally overthrew the old system and substituted for it a democratic government.

The colour-print artists were, for the most part, ignored by the cultured upper classes. They were men of little or no education. Toyokuni I. was the son of a maker of puppets; Kunisada was at one time the keeper of a ferry-boat; and Hokkei was a fish-hawker before he found his vocation. Then there was another reason for this social boycotting—the subjects of which they treated in their pictures. A large proportion of these were representations of actors in character. Now, in Japan the fondness for the theatre was an overwhelming passion with the common people, but by the nobility and aris-

tocracy the stage was utterly tabooed. No person of good family dared openly to attend a theatrical performance. Actors, therefore, were ranked in the social scale as the lowest of the low—beneath even the humblest artisans. Even the colour-print artists, who earned their living by depicting them, would never dream of associating with them on terms of equality.

Then another favourite subject was the delineation of the famous beauties of the Yoshiwara and the tea-houses. It is evident that the nature of the subject in this case also would be sufficient to damn the prints in the eyes of the better classes.

But, with the alien, "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise"; and where the educated Japanese would see vulgarity and coarseness—where, perhaps, such was even intended—we, happily, see only a beautiful decorative effect.

So in Japan the colour print was the picture of the poorer classes. Costing a mere trifle, it occupied in their humble homes the place of the more expensive kakemono.

It is a matter of surprise to the cultured Japanese to find how these despised objects are prized by European collectors; and, valuing

them little themselves, they have exported them wholesale, till comparatively few remain in Japan, the bulk of fine prints being now in Europe or America.

Though far surpassing in delicacy and beauty the colour prints of Europe and elsewhere, the Japanese prints are produced by means wonderfully simple, and depend for their fine qualities entirely on the wonderful skill of the craftsman.

The process is as follows :—The drawing is first made by the artist, with brush and Indian ink, on a sheet of thin paper. After being oiled to make it transparent this paper is pasted, face downwards to ensure the necessary reversal, on a block of soft cherry-wood. The engraver now proceeds to outline the picture with a knife. Then with gauge and chisel the superfluous wood is boldly cut away, and the result is a key block in line. From proofs coloured by the artist a further series of blocks are cut, one for each colour used. It may be mentioned here that the cherry-wood blocks are not cut across the grain, as in the case of the boxwood blocks we use for wood engraving, but in a line with the grain.

Then comes the work of a third craftsman,

A FIGURE STUDY

From a Colour Print by TOYOKUNI

the printer. He mixes his colours for each printing, and applies them carefully to the block with a brush. Then the paper is damped and laid on the block. No press is used, but with a rubber or baren, made of a bunch of twisted fibre in a sheaf of bamboo leaf, the impression is carefully rubbed off. And so each block is used in succession until the picture is complete, accuracy of register being obtained in the most wonderful manner by rough guiding marks cut on the blocks. Sometimes metallic dusts are used in printing, and again a kind of embossing or high relief is obtained by pressure on an uninked block. It is said that this pressure is often applied by using the point of the elbow as a rubber.

The prints were issued by publishers chiefly in Yedo, the engraver and printer being simply workmen in the publisher's employment. Sometimes the artist, too, was employed entirely by him, living in his house, and occupying a position somewhat equivalent to that of a designer for a commercial firm.

The first Japanese artist to make drawings for the wood engraver was Hishigawa Moronobu (1637-1714). These, however, were not colour

prints but merely woodcuts in black and white. He illustrated quite a number of books during the latter half of the seventeenth century.

A further development was the colouring of the prints by hand, which was introduced largely by Torii Kiyonobu (1664-1729), the founder of the long line of Torii artists who devoted themselves almost entirely to theatrical subjects. It is among the immediate successors of Torii Kiyonobu that the art of printing in colours direct from the blocks appears to have arisen—at first only one or two tints being used.

The perfecting of the process is due to Suzuki Harunobu, who, going beyond a few tints on the main objects, filled in the whole picture with colour. And, though the first of the great colour-print artists, in many respects his work has never been surpassed. Most of his prints are small in size, containing only a single figure, exquisitely poised, and characterised by extreme elegance and grace of line. His colour schemes were quiet and refined—grey, a pale red, one or two tints of olive green, being the components of some of his most delicate harmonies. His prints are rare, and his signature has been paid the doubtful compliment of being more

A FIGURE GROUP

From a Colour Print by UTAMARO

extensively forged than that of any of his fellow-artists. His style, however, was more difficult to reproduce. Many of his successors fell under his influence, but even in their most successful efforts they never quite caught his peculiar elegance and charm.

Of his contemporaries the most noteworthy was Koriusai. Less delicate and refined than Harunobu, he worked in a bolder style, his drawing being particularly vigorous. His bird studies are very fine; and South Kensington Museum contains some excellent examples of his work—notably one, a clever contrast of a crow and a white heron against a grey-green background.

Reflecting Harunobu more decidedly is Shunsho, who became the master of the great Hokusai. His studies of female figures are particularly graceful and of charming colour, and his prints of theatrical subjects vigorous and striking. He died in 1790, at the age of sixty-seven.

Contemporary with Shunsho was Torii Kiyonaga, an artist who not only did fine work himself but exercised a great influence on the artists who followed him. Working with fuller colour than his predecessors he increased the number of

blocks considerably, and his charming drawings of the gorgeously-dressed beauties of the Yoshiwara set the fashion afterwards so largely followed.

We now come to one of the chief of the colour-print artists—Kitagawa Utamaro, next to Hokusai the most famous of all. His female studies were something quite new and distinctive, superb in line and composition, the heavy masses of black being used with consummate ease and mastery. There is an exquisite quality in his drawing, too; the features are delineated with the utmost fineness and delicacy. Indeed, to distinguish a forgery from a genuine Utamaro, one has only to examine the drawing of the hands and the face. His colour is delightful, and beautifully subtle — lavender, pink, green, and grey—but always saved from weakness by the dexterous use of the masses of solid black. Besides his female figures we have a few landscapes and flower studies, and a particularly fine little volume of insect drawings. It is related by his father in the preface of this book that, when a child, Utamaro was continually catching and examining insects, till he was afraid that the boy might acquire a habit of killing the harmless creatures. The book, however, is not entirely devoted to harmless insects, one of the

drawings being a masterly study of a snake. A touch of mica used in the printing gives it a slimy sheen, and the long, coiling body, every inch of it alive and moving, is a wonderful piece of drawing. To rival it one would require to turn to the work of another Japanese artist—the netsuké carver.

Yeishi, Yeizan, and Kiyomine, who followed immediately after, adopted his style and followed his methods closely; but rich though their effects are, and full of detail, they lack the dignity and simplicity of the earlier workers.

One of the most characteristic of all the great artists, and worthy to rank with Harunobu and Utamaro, is Toyokuni I., born in 1769. His work also was at first affected by the ornate style of Kiyonaga; and among his earlier prints are studies of gorgeously-dressed ladies, a riot of rich colour and elaborate detail, but later he turned his attention to theatrical prints, and evolved the style, distinctively his own, which became afterwards the recognised method of treating such subjects. In his lines the grace and suavity of the earlier masters become hardened to a certain severity, but what was lost in grace was gained in strength. The

violent action in some of his prints is an illustration of the forcible manner in which the truth can be conveyed by a judicious exaggeration; and again, in repose, his figures have a dignity which is monumental. This effect is heightened, too, by the reticence and restraint with which he uses colour—full, strong tints, but few, and laid on in broad masses. Breadth of effect was what he aimed at and secured. In Japan he was more popular than any of his contemporaries, Utamaro not excepted; and, whereas their followers were limited to a few immediate successors, he was the founder of a regular school. Of these the best is Kunisada, known as Toyokuni II., whose early work especially was almost worthy to rank with that of his master.

But the greatest master of all the colour-print artists, and one who by European critics has been acclaimed as worthy to rank with the great artists of the world, was Hokusai. It is a mark of the power of his personality that, though he lived and died in poverty and obscurity, the facts of his life are recorded with some degree of fulness; while, as a rule, little record is left of his contemporaries but their work. Born in 1760, he was apprenticed at the age of eighteen

to Shunsho, but was too original in his methods, and too independent, to remain in that position long. For some years he drifted about, being reduced at one time to hawking red pepper, calendars, and other small wares in the streets of Yedo, but all the time he was getting more and more command over his art.

In the preface to the "Hundred Views of Fuji" he thus summarises his life: "From the age of six I had a mania for drawing the forms of things. By the time I was fifty I had published an infinity of designs; but all I have produced before the age of seventy is not worth taking into account. At seventy-three I have learned a little about the real structure of nature, of animals, plants, trees, birds, fishes, and insects. In consequence, when I am eighty, I shall have made still more progress. At ninety I shall penetrate the mystery of things; at a hundred I shall certainly have reached a marvellous stage; and when I am a hundred and ten everything I do, be it but a dot or a line, will be alive. I beg those who live as long as I to see if I do not keep my word. Written at the age of seventy-five by me, once Hokusai, to-day Gwakio Rojin, the old man mad about drawing."

And, indeed, this was no idle boast, for he lived to a great age, and steadily gained power. When finally stricken down the old man's lively spirit is still unsubdued, and he writes playfully to a friend: "King Yemma [the Japanese Pluto], being very old, is retiring from business, so he has built a pretty country house, and asks me to go and paint a kakemono for him. I am thus obliged to leave, and when I go shall carry my drawings with me. I am going to take a room at the corner of the street, and shall be happy to see you whenever you pass that way."

To the end his mind was absorbed by his art. On his death-bed he was heard to murmur: "If Heaven could only grant me ten more years." Then a moment after: "If Heaven had only granted me five more years I should have become a real painter." He died on the 10th of May 1849, in his ninetieth year.

On his tomb is inscribed this little verse, composed, according to the national custom, during his last hours:

"My soul, turned Will-o'-the-wisp,
Can come and go at ease over the summer fields."

All his life beset with poverty, unhappy in

his domestic life, his dauntless spirit sustained him, and his incessant industry never flagged. He lived for the most part with one daughter, an artist also, in a bare room, with little or no furniture beyond his painting materials. When the room became unbearably dirty—and they were not squeamish—they changed to another house. Always poor, dressed like a pauper, ascetic in his mode of life, he had an utter contempt for money. When he received payment for his work the money lay uncounted at his side, and when importuned by a creditor he threw him one of the unopened packets and went back to his work.

In 1817 he published the first volume of the "Mangwa," a collection of rough sketches, which, in its fifteen volumes, forms a veritable encyclopædia of Japanese life and industries, and is sufficient alone to establish him as one of the great draughtsmen of the world. These sketches were printed from woodblocks in a scheme of black, grey, and light red, and included studies of every kind—street scenes, architecture, birds, beasts, flowers, and insects. The "Hundred Views of Fuji," similar in style, added still further to his reputation.

But even more striking and distinctive is the great series of colour prints illustrating the landscape of his country—the waterfalls, the bridges, and the "Thirty-Six Views of Fuji," which are something quite new in Japanese art, not conventional landscapes of the old Chinese style, abstract and ideal scenes, but pictures of certain places, each with its individuality strongly stamped upon it. They are, however, equally far from the Western realistic standpoint, each picture being an audacious decorative arrangement both as regards line and colour. Most daring of all are the waterfalls, superb in their boldness of conception and rich, full colour, but equally fascinating are the quieter harmonies of the "Thirty-Six Views of Fuji." To study such pictures is to be lifted out of the commonplace view of things and to look at nature through the temperament and with the eyes of a poet.

But, while so highly esteemed by European connoisseurs, Hokusai is by no means so highly thought of in Japan. And this is not entirely due to the fact that he was a man of the people, a painter of the vulgar and the commonplace. Though it is hardly possible for us to overrate the magnitude of his genius, still, the more we

ONE OF THE THIRTY-SIX VIEWS OF FUJI

From a Colour Print by HOKUSAI

learn of the great painters of the older schools the more we see the reason of the Japanese verdict, for even we would hesitate to place his work alongside that of Cho Densu, of Sesshiu, and of the great Kano masters. The fact is that no man, however great, can afford to do as Hokusai did—to set aside altogether the accumulated benefits of centuries of experience and work absolutely fresh from the beginning. The greatness of his achievement shows the power of his personality, but the greatest results of all are built on the foundations of others. And in spite of its amazing originality and its force we must recognise that in Hokusai's style there is a lack of the dignified reticence and grace—the culture, in fact—of the best work of the classic schools.

But the distinction lies even deeper. His outlook, keen and marvellously accurate to catch any passing phase, has not the deep seriousness of the older masters. He was a modern of the moderns — materialistic, humorous, somewhat flippant—while they were mystics, striving to pierce through the veil and discover the truths lying beyond. Each represents the spirit of his time, and, though the comparison is interesting and needful, it is due more in justice to the older

men than to Hokusai, whose reputation, it is safe to say, will in Europe mount higher and higher, while the qualities of the old classic painters will appeal to but a few kindred spirits.

One other colour printer of the first rank remains—Hiroshigé I., worthy to rank with Harunobu, Utamaro, Toyokuni, and Hokusai. His landscape prints are particularly charming in their delicate renderings of effects of atmosphere and light, and no one could portray better the peaceful effects of quiet evening light.

But the art which culminated in the work of these great men entered now into a period of decline. The latest artists brought nothing that was new; and, charming though much of their work was, it merely repeated, with continually lessening effect, what had been said before.

With the opening of the country to European influence came the final degradation—the introduction of violent aniline dyes to take the place of the old soft Japanese tints.

Since 1880 a slight revival of the art has taken place, but it has, as yet, produced nothing to rival the productions of even fifty years ago.

A LANDSCAPE

From a Colour Print by HIROSHIGÉ

CHAPTER IV

SCULPTURE AND CARVING

LIKE the sister art of painting, the art of sculpture arose in Japan with the coming of the Buddhist priests from Korea in the sixth century. But though both existed together in the great Buddhist monasteries the latter seemed for the first few hundred years to entirely eclipse the former, for the first great products of Buddhist art in Japan were seen in the figures carved in wood or cast in bronze which adorned the shrines of the temples.

Time, too, has dealt less severely with these relics, or rather, less perishable in their nature, they have been better able to survive the dangers that so often swept away the frailer kakemonos of the painter, and in many of the old temples are preserved the works of these early sculptors. Such statues were rarely or never in stone, but either of wood—which material always seems as plastic as clay in the

hands of the Japanese craftsman—or cast in bronze. Why this should have been it is difficult to say. Perhaps the lack of a suitable stone at hand, and the difficulty of transporting large and heavy blocks long distances in a rough and hilly country, had something to do with the matter. In any case, wood and bronze were at first entirely used for the work. Some centuries later a fine grey clay, found at Nara, mixed with vegetable fibre, like the bricks of Egypt, and, like them, hardened without baking, came into use. Another interesting method of working was the covering over with thin lacquer, mixed with powdered bark, a model made of coarse cloth stiffened with glue. Works in both these last styles were frequently gilded or painted.

Arising in India, Buddhist art spread northward with the spread of the creed through China to Korea, and as it went farther north its characteristics were largely altered and moulded by the different types of the northern Buddhists. The Hindu sensitiveness gave place to a Chinese solidity, which, again, was mellowed and softened by the gentler influences of Korea.

The early Buddhist altar-pieces of Japan are

marked by a sweet and dignified serenity. Unlike the great Greek sculptures, they do not represent the ideal of the natural human form, but rather endeavour to express in terms of the human form an abstract or spiritual beauty. Their figures are personifications of abstract qualities—Reason, Pity, Charity, Fortitude, Beauty, Divine Love, for the northern Buddhist doctrine was a gentle one; the world was not a hopeless dream, as in the Hindu form, but a storehouse of forms to be idealised.

The temple of Horiuji at Nara, the first Buddhist temple built in Japan, is one of the richest of all in art treasures, and contains many fine examples of the old work. One of the earliest known specimens there is a life-sized seated figure of Kwannon, said to be the work of Prince Shotoku himself, and, in any case, dating from about the end of the sixth century. The figure is nude from the waist upwards, and is modelled with great severity of style, so that the anatomical forms are almost lost; but this, with the simplicity of the drapery, only concentrates the attention on the serene dignity of the expression, and adds to the power and impressiveness of the statue.

During the seventh century there arose at Nara a school of bronze casters, who produced a number of beautiful altarpieces, more than a hundred of which still exist. They are of small size, varying from six inches to three feet in height, and in delicacy of modelling and elegance of style they far surpass any of the Indian, Chinese, or Korean work. The triumph of the school is seen in a little group of three at Horiuji : a seated Buddha with two standing figures, backed by a richly-wrought folding screen.

It is a beautiful piece of work, the lines graceful and flowing, the modelling subtle and of exquisite finish. Perhaps the finest part of all is the openwork halo, pierced with a floral design, behind the head of the central figure. In its own way this group, executed about 680 A.D., is one of the gems of Japanese art.

Towards the end of the seventh century a wave of Greek feeling, which had slowly spread from India and had produced what was known as the Greco-Buddhist art, reached Japan, and its influence is seen in a certain ampler sense of human dignity and proportion absent in the earlier works. In 695 A.D. an attempt was made

COLOSSAL BRONZE IMAGE OF A BODHISATWA

(*South Kensington Museum*)

to cast three large bronze figures of about twelve feet high, but it was a failure. In 715 A.D., however, Giogi, who ranks among Japan's greatest sculptors, successfully cast an altarpiece for the temple of Yakushiji, Nara, of even greater dimensions—a trinity of a seated Buddha and two standing figures. In the opinion of many this work represents the culmination of the art of bronze casting in Japan. For largeness of conception, easy grace and elegance of pose, richness and beauty of finish, it has never been surpassed.

But a still more astonishing development was yet to come in the colossal bronzes, which exceed in size any other pieces of casting the world has seen. The largest of all, a seated Buddha, is at Nara, and, no less than fifty-three feet in height, is the greatest bronze statue that has ever been cast. A figure of great dignity, it has, however, suffered much by the lapse of years. The head was damaged by an earthquake in 855 A.D., and later by a fire, and was finally replaced by another in the sixteenth century. Much finer as a work of art, though slightly smaller, being forty-nine feet seven inches in height, is the Daibutsu, or Great Buddha, at

Kamakura, which is considerably later in date, the best judges placing it at 1252. The seated figure, with hands folded in contemplation, is of almost oppressive dignity and power. The modelling is simple and severe, the drapery hangs in large ample folds, and the face bears an expression of profound and majestic calm. In the history of art we have met such an expression before; there is something akin to it in the strange, inscrutable smile of the Sphinx. But the calm of the Buddha has a deeper and more spiritual quality: it is the calm of perfect knowledge; it speaks of the conquest of human passions and a spiritual peace elevated far above all earthly things.

The statue was originally surrounded by a building fifty yards square, the roof supported by sixty-three massive pillars; but this shelter was swept away by a tidal wave in 1369, and again in 1494. Since the latter date it has not been rebuilt, though the stone foundations may still be seen. In the rather irreverent phrase of the Japanese, the Daibutsu has become a "wet god."

The process of casting these colossal bronzes is not known in detail. In all probability a full-

sized model was first built up, and from it the mould made in several pieces. The Kamakura Daibutsu is formed of sheets of bronze, each cast separately, then brazed together, and finished on the outside with the chisel.

With the decline of this old Buddhist work in bronze appeared another phase of the sculptor's art, which continued to a much later date, and exhibited a different side of the national character. I refer to the grotesque figures of gods or demons which are so characteristic of early Japanese carving. These vary in size from a few inches to between twenty and thirty feet in height, and are chiefly executed in wood, several pieces being joined together in the larger works.

The most famous exponent of the school was Unkei, who lived at the end of the twelfth, and beginning of the thirteenth century. At the gateway of the temple of To-Dai-ji at Nara stood a pair of Nio, or Temple Guardians—huge figures of sinister aspect and terrific power, hewn out of wood—the one by Unkei, the other by Kwaikei, his contemporary. It is said that after Unkei's death the king of the nether world objected that, whereas the sculptor had many times endeavoured to depict him, he had never

succeeded in doing him justice. Accordingly, Unkei was sent back to the earth that, having seen the god himself, he might carve his portrait faithfully.

Though on a small scale, only standing two and a half feet high, a pair of little wooden demons by Koben, the third son of Unkei, exhibit the same grotesqueness, combined with an almost terrible power. The masterly representation of the straining muscles shows clearly that the Japanese artist could model the human figure realistically when he pleased, and that when he conventionalised he did so knowingly, and for a given purpose, as has been the custom of the decorative artist from time immemorial.

The third phase, which marks the early sculptures, is the series of portrait statues, chiefly carved in wood, and it is curious to know that most of these extremely realistic studies were executed during the highly idealistic Buddhist period. The statues of two saints, for instance, Asanga and Vasubandhu, in Kofokuji, which are said to date from the eighth century, are absolutely realistic in style. The drapery certainly is treated in a broad and simple manner, but the face and expression is obviously a portrait, a

PORTRAIT OF SENNO RIKIU, CARVED IN WOOD AND LACQUERED
(*British Museum*)

study of an individual. Many of these portraits exist, dating chiefly from the eighth to about the thirteenth century, and are all strong and characteristic presentments of actual men—speaking likenesses.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century the sculptor's art gradually fell into disuse, the traditions of the craft only surviving in the beautiful carving which adorned the temple buildings, but which was looked on not as the work of an artist but merely as that of a carpenter.

The legitimate successor of the old sculptors appeared some hundreds of years later, and not as the maker of colossal images and life-sized portraits, but as the netsuké carver, the greatest master of the art of *multum in parvo* that the world has seen. In the narrow field of a cubic inch or so the sculptor, for he is no less, combines a largeness of conception with a breadth and vigour of execution which are absolutely astonishing. But there is between the old Buddhist sculptor and the netsuké and okimono carver the same difference which divides the painter of the old classic schools from the more modern exponent of the Ukioyé-Riu—the change

from the ideal point of view to the material. The art of the netsuké carver, often bold and vigorous, sometimes elaborately finished, is always frankly realistic.

The netsuké (pronounced netské) is a toggle or button varying in size, but often little larger than a marble. The Japanese gentleman in native costume has no pockets other than his wide sleeves, and so his pipe and tobacco pouch, his inro or medicine-box, and other small objects, are carried slung by a cord to his girdle, like a chatelaine. At the end of the cord was the netsuké, which prevented the objects from slipping to the ground.

It is said that the use of the netsuké dates from the fifteenth century, but the great majority have been made within the last two hundred years. In the opinion of the expert the finest specimens date from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As the nineteenth century advanced a loss of breadth in the treatment is observable, with a greater elaboration of detail, and this tendency caused the gradual degeneration of the art, until it became little more than a wonderful exhibition of perfect manual skill, lacking the life which breathed in the older work.

The netsuké is made of various materials, of which the two chief are wood and ivory, and is pierced with one or more holes for the passage of the cord. In the eyes of the connoisseur the wooden specimens are generally the most valuable; and justly so, for not only are the Japanese most masterly artists in wood, but the material lends itself to a freer and bolder style of work than the harder and unsympathetic ivory, retaining the slightest impression of the artist's individuality. Between the two there is much the same difference as between the free and spontaneous clay sketch of the sculptor, recording the very print of his fingers, and the coldly severe and more pretentious marble.

Still, it must be admitted that even in ivory the Japanese carver attained in a wonderful degree the qualities of freshness and ease which we are accustomed to look for only in more ductile materials.

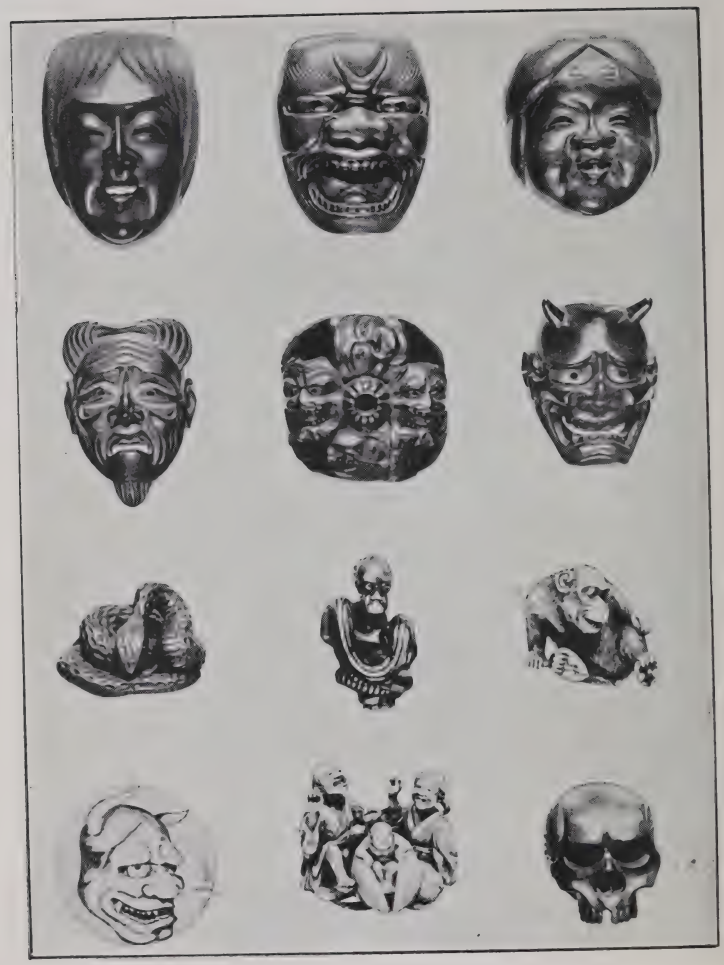
The shape and size of the netsuké is regulated by the purpose for which it is intended. It must be large enough not to slip through the girdle, and we usually find that they range from about the size of a walnut to nearly three times that size. Any excrescences or projections would, of

course, be liable to snap off, and so, especially in the older specimens, the outline is generally rounded, and without sharp angles. The holes through which the cord passes are often ingeniously made to form part of the design. The fact that many netsukés were also used as seals, and also that so many early examples are of triangular form, so as to stand firmly on their base, is looked on by some authorities as evidence that the netsuké was evolved from the seal.

Often the wood used was coloured, lacquered, and gilt. Sometimes wood and ivory were combined, often ivory and metal, but almost every material was used on occasion. Porcelain netsukés were not uncommon, and gold, silver, jet, coral, and enamel were all applied to the ornamentation of the netsuké.

The Kagami-buta were buttons of metal with a shank at the back. This was enclosed in a circular hollow dish of ivory or wood, which had a hole in the back through which the cord attached to the shank passed. These examples are often very beautiful, the combination of the metal centre, often chased and adorned with gold and silver, with the plain outer ring of ivory being very pleasing in effect.

The Manju netsuké, a round, flattened disc, so



A GROUP OF NETSUKÉS

(British Museum)

called from its resemblance to a Manju, or rice cake, is another well-known form.

As to subject, the whole field of Japanese mythology, history, and literature is recorded in their netsuké. Perhaps the finest of all are the miniature representations of the masks used in the No dance—sometimes beautiful, sometimes comical, often grotesque, but always artistic. Then we have the beautifully finished carvings of insects; snakes twisted in lifelike coils; a goose with its bill caught in a closed clam shell, and vainly flapping its wings; fishes, tortoises, mice—all varieties of animal life: it is a veritable illustrated natural history. Then in lifelike groups we have the whole world of legendary folklore laid before us. The Tongue-cut sparrow, Motomoro the peach child, and many other old fairy tales, are here retold; while men and women in all the occupations of their trades and callings give an epitome of contemporary Japanese life.

The names of the famous netsuké carvers are too numerous to record here. One of the most celebrated was Shuzan, who lived early in the eighteenth century, a volume of whose designs was published in 1781.

Of late years, since the use of the netsuké has begun to die out, the carver has turned his attention to okimono—small pieces not pierced for the cord, and intended merely as cabinet ornaments. Many of these little ivories are exquisitely beautiful. European work, even of the best, looks weak and poor beside them ; and even the best Chinese carving, though perhaps equally dexterous in manipulation, seems dull and mechanical contrasted with their never-failing fertility of imagination.

CHAPTER V

METAL WORK

We have already treated, with some fulness, of the beautiful bronze statues which adorned the old Buddhist temples; but though his highest achievement, these represent only a small part of the work of the Japanese bronze caster. The old temple bells, the incense burners, the great temple lanterns, all were of exquisite workmanship. And the art was also applied to domestic uses, the ordinary cooking utensils, the more ornamental vases, and the dainty bronze mirrors being but a few of its products.

One of the finest and oldest bells is at the temple of To-Dai-ji at Nara. Cast in 732 A.D., it stands 13 feet 6 inches high, the diameter across the rim is 9 feet 1 inch, while the weight of metal is over forty tons.

The method of ringing such a bell is different from that to which we are accustomed. Instead of a loose tongue hung inside, a heavy swing

beam is mounted outside the bell, which it strikes on the rim. The vibrations of each stroke are allowed to die away ere the next is struck, and the great waves of sound go pealing for miles over the quiet countryside.

The casting of a temple bell was made the occasion of a great religious festival. A large kiln was built, worshippers attended from all the surrounding country, women casting their ornaments into the melting-pot. The priests announced with a loud voice the successful accomplishment of each stage of the work, and the concluding operations took place amid scenes of great rejoicings.

At To-Dai-ji is also a very fine specimen of a temple lantern, ornamented with beautiful openwork panels; while at the temple of Kofu-kuji, Nara, is a masterly piece of bronze in the shape of a musical instrument, a sort of gong, called the Kwagen-Kei, surrounded by four twining dragons—a most fantastic but vigorous piece of modelling.

The mirrors of polished bronze are said to have been first cast in the reign of Keiko, about 100 A.D. They are of two kinds—the first fitted with a handle, or with a stand of metal or

TWO BOWLS OF CAST BRONZE (18TH CENTURY)

(South Kensington Museum)

carved wood; and the second much smaller, often not more than four inches in diameter, with a hole at the back through which a cord passed. The face was burnished, and the back beautifully wrought in designs of great delicacy.

The method of casting employed in these and similar articles, which is still characteristic of Japanese work, was as follows:—An exact model of the object, with the ornamentation complete as in the finished article, was made in wax. A slip was then prepared with very fine sand, clay, and water, and the model carefully coated with the mixture, special care being taken to run it into all the hollow places, so that a complete skin covered the wax at every part. When the first coat dried another was added, and another and another, a slightly thicker paste being used for each successive coat. A coarser and stronger mixture was used for the outer layers, till the model was incased in a hard, solid crust. Vent holes were then drilled and the wax melted out. After being carefully heated the moulds were ready to receive the molten metal, which was then poured in. When the casting was cold the moulds were broken off and the metal exposed to view.

This system not only ensured individuality in the work, a fresh mould being made for each piece, but allowed of a depth of modelling and under-cutting which would have been impossible had the mould been in pieces to be drawn apart and afterwards used again.

The metal work of Japan may be conveniently grouped in three classes. First, the early work characterised by extreme elegance, ornament being used sparingly, though with great taste and often marvellous vigour. Then comes a middle period, dating from the coming of the Tokugawa dynasty at the end of the sixteenth century, when a class of work highly ornamented and rich in detail came into vogue. And, lastly, we have the more modern naturalistic school, wonderful in technique, but lacking the inspiration of the older styles, and beside it appearing dull and commonplace.

South Kensington Museum is particularly rich in Japanese metal work, especially bronzes, of all these styles. There are several fine temple lanterns, notably one pair, standing about eight feet high, of very elegant design, and ornamented with great reticence and taste. A smaller pair, evidently later in date, contain some wonderful

casting, but in their more ornate quality lack the dignity of the first pair.

A piece much esteemed by some critics is the large Koro, or incense burner, of quite modern work, cast in 1878—a life-sized study of peacocks, doves, and sparrows. It is certainly a wonderful piece of realism. The poses are natural, the texture of the feathers is imitated in the unyielding metal with marvellous fidelity, single plumes standing out in full relief; but, placed beside the best old work, the whole thing seems trivial and even vulgar. The birds are lifelike to just this extent: if they were only coloured we should think they were stuffed specimens. But from the true artist we get more than this camera-like reproduction of nature; he can also give us the spirit. Turn from this case to the Miochin eagle beside it. As a piece of realism it is worthy to compare with the other, but how much more it conveys. There is a marvellous poise about the bird, a vigour and sweep of line that makes it live and breathe the intense ferocity of its nature. It is alive, while the other merely irritates by its close resemblance to life. Of iron, partly cast and partly made up of hammered plates, it is the work of Miochin

Muneharu, a member of the famous Miochin family of armourers, and dates from the sixteenth century.

The smaller pieces in the collection—the vases, trays, bowls, and candlesticks—are also well worthy of study, and illustrate the same tendency—the older work charming by its stately simplicity, and sometimes also by its vigorous treatment of the grotesque; the modern apt to become a mass of exquisitely executed decorations of a highly naturalistic but rather trivial nature.

But in the early years of Japan the implements of war chiefly occupied the attention of the metal worker, and during the bitter civil wars that devastated the country the swordsmith and the armourer became persons of great importance.

The famous family of Miochin has been associated with the making of arms and armour as far back as records extend. An authentic member of the family, Masuda Munemori, wrought helmets and armour in 75 A.D.; and, further back still, there is the legendary founder of the line, who is said to be the grandson of the god Takara himself, who taught him the art of working in metals. From the twelfth to

THE MIOCHIN EAGLE

Cast and Hammered Iron, 16th century

(*South Kensington Museum*)

the eighteenth centuries they held the position of armourers to the Court.

The armour of the Miochins was formed of thin iron plates, very light, but wonderfully strong. One specimen, a helmet of the sixteenth century, though 12 inches in length, 10 in width, and 8 in height, only weighs 2 lbs. 2 oz. The usual shape of helmet was a domelike headpiece, strengthened with ridges of iron plates, while flaps formed of a number of narrow plates hung at the sides, and covered the back of the neck. From the centre, just above the forehead, rose two curious curved horns, called tsunomoto, and between them was worn the crest of the warrior. In a famous suit of Miochin armour of the twelfth century the helmet has a dragon worked in repoussé coiling round it, the head, with open mouth, glaring from between the tsunomoto, while the tail forms the spike on the top. Although wrought in so hard a metal as iron the dragon's head stands up in relief at least an inch from the background. Similar work in repoussé adorns the breastplate and armpieces.

But much of the finest work of the Japanese metal worker is found in the two-handed swords, which were the chief weapon of the soldiers, and

which, in feudal times, became the distinctive mark of the Samurai, the aristocratic military class. The Japanese blades are unsurpassed by the most famous swords of Damascus, India, and Persia, and the craft of the swordsmith was looked on as the most honourable of all handicrafts. Men of aristocratic birth often took up its duties, and the famous swordmakers had the highest titles conferred upon them. The name of the greatest of them all—Masamuné—passed into the language as a term signifying supreme excellence, for a Masamuné blade was unequalled, and would sever a floating hair carried against its edge by the gentle current of a stream, or cleave through a solid bar of iron.

The sword, indeed, was the centre of the old military life of Japan. To know its history, its etiquette, was part of the education of all Samurai youths, and it was a grand moment for them when, at the age of fifteen, they entered on man's estate and girded on the coveted weapon.

A fine sword was handed down from father to son as an heirloom; it was their most cherished possession, and especially in the more peaceful times which followed the establishment of the

Tokugawa dynasty it was enriched with the finest work that art could produce.

The forging of a sword was conducted with almost the solemnity attending a religious rite. The katanya, or swordsmith, fasted for days before, and when all was prepared he went to the temple and prayed for a blessing on his work. In the forge was hung a consecrated rope of straw and clippings of paper to drive away evil spirits; and, having first propitiated the five elements—fire, water, wood, metal, and earth—the smith donned the ceremonial robes of a Court noble, and, binding back the wide sleeves, was ready to take hammer in hand.

First a strip of steel is welded to a bar of iron, which serves as a handle; other strips are placed upon it, and it is wrought into a bar of the required dimensions. Carefully coated with a paste of clay and ashes, and never touched with the naked hand, this bar is heated in the charcoal furnace, notched in the middle with a chisel, doubled over, and then beaten out to its former size and shape. This folding process is repeated fifteen times, then four such bars are welded together, and the doubling and welding repeated five more times, so that if each

bar consisted first of all of four flakes this has now been increased to 16,777,216 layers of metal. Many different textures are obtained by flattening the bar in different manners, some giving the appearance of a grain as in wood. The preparatory welding being finished, the blade is then drawn out to its full length, shaped, and roughly ground.

But the most critical part of the process, the tempering of the steel, is now to come. And the peculiar combination required—an extremely hard edge, with the rest of the blade soft and tough—the Japanese swordsmith, unlike others, produces in one operation instead of two. The blade is coated with a mixture of fine clay and powdered charcoal. This covering is then scraped away along the edge, leaving exposed a strip of metal about a quarter of an inch wide. Raised in the furnace to the required heat, the blade glowing dull red while the edge is white hot, the sword is then plunged into a bath of water at a certain temperature, and the operation is finished.

The process of tempering was always conducted by the forger himself, no one else being allowed to enter the precincts of the forge, so

jealously were his professional secrets guarded. It is said that a famous swordsmith paid for this knowledge by the loss of his hand. He had learned all but the heat of the tempering bath, and this vital secret his master refused to impart to him, so at the critical moment he burst into the forge and plunged his hand into the water. The furious master struck off his hand with one blow of the unfinished sword, but the apprentice had learned his secret.

The old smiths used to sing while tempering a blade, and the spirit of the music was said to enter into the metal. Masamuné chanted a refrain: "Tenku, taihei, taihei"—"Peace be on earth, peace"—and his swords never failed their owner, but always bore him to victory. But the blades of his saturnine pupil Muramasa always brought trouble with them. Their owners were ever in quarrels, and, once unsheathed, the sword was never satisfied without blood, so that it could not even be handled with safety. The reason for this was that, as he tempered the blades, Muramasa sang grimly: "Tenku tairan, tenku tairan"—"Trouble in the world, trouble in the world."

After tempering, the blade was slowly ground

on a series of whetstones, getting finer and finer, finishing with a careful polishing with stone-powder, and oil.

A volume might be written on the decoration of the sword. The tsuba or guard, the handle of the ko-katana or little knife, carried in the side of the scabbard; the fuchi and kashira, or mounts of the handle, especially were marked by the most exquisite ornamentation.

In his knowledge of the properties of different metals and their alloys, and in his combinations of these for one general effect, the Japanese metal worker is unique. Many of the alloys used by him were quite unknown to us, and were chosen chiefly for their colours. For the metal workers' designs were in reality colour studies, and in metal he possessed a palette of really astonishing variety. For black he had shakudo, a rich, deep tint, flashing in some lights a violet blue. Oxidised iron gave a very dark brown, almost black, and also a rich chocolate colour. Light browns, running from coffee colour to saffron yellow, were obtained from different kinds of bronze. Copper gave a deep ruddy tint, coban and other combinations of gold and silver a pale greenish yellow,

gold a rich, full yellow, shibu-ichi a dull grey, while white was obtained by the use of silver or polished steel.

In South Kensington there is a vase, a very fine specimen of this work in colours. The vase itself, beautifully shaped, is of iron, a warm chocolate brown. On this is inlaid a graceful design of birds and flowers, gleaming and sparkling in gold and silver, copper colour, green, blue, and violet.

In sword mountings this style of decoration was extensively used, and effects of great richness and beauty were obtained.

The tsuba, or sword guard, is a flat plate of metal, usually circular or slightly elliptical in form; but other styles, such as diamonds, squares, octagons, and irregular shapes decided by the exigencies of the design, are not uncommon. In size they vary from three to four inches in diameter, according to the size of the sword, and weigh from two to three ounces. The tsuba usually contains three openings—the central one wedge shaped, through which the tang of the blade passes, and two other smaller openings, one on each side, to allow for the passage of the kozuka and kogai to their sheaths in the sides of the scabbard.

The earliest guards were made entirely of iron, and in many later tsuba this still forms the basis. But bronze in its various forms was also much used as a ground for ornamentation; and an alloy, sentoku, containing copper, zinc, tin, and lead, and of a soft yellow tint like brass, was another favourite material. In the latest periods other substances, such as bone, ivory, tortoiseshell, wood, leather, and papier-maché, the last three being coated with lacquer, were sometimes used.

One of the earliest methods of ornamenting the iron tsuba was what is known as kebori, or hair-line chasing. This was not executed with a graving tool but with a small chisel held in the left hand, and driven towards the worker with blows from a light hammer. This style of ornament reached its height during the sixteenth century, and may be seen in great perfection in the work of Goto Yujo.

A development of this style was the hira-zogan. In this lines were first engraved to a uniform depth and then undercut. Soft gold or silver wire was then hammered in, the wedge-shaped opening retaining it firmly without the use of any solder. Kebori-zogan was a combination of the two styles,

The kata-kiri-bori style depended for its effect not on the inlay of different metals but on designs in relief or intaglio. Often the design was defined by piercing, and the detail brought out by chasing and modelling in relief. In most cases the work was entirely that of the chisel and the hammer, untouched by any subsequent grinding or polishing.

In the kata-kiri-bori-zogan style — figured, sculptured, and encrusted work—we find the latest and most elaborate productions of the more modern schools, enamels being also used to add richness to the effect.

The iron, which forms the most usual material, is of exceedingly fine quality and of unusual softness. In many cases it was left rough from the hammer and punch, the marks, seemingly so careless, forming essential parts of the decoration. Etching with acids was sometimes adopted to bring out into greater prominence the twists and foldings of the wrought iron. In some cases, also, a surface grained like wood was obtained by welding together many strips of iron of different qualities and then treating with acid, which, of course, affected more strongly the softer layers.

It is doubtful when the tsuba first began to be an object of art, no specimens of an earlier date than the fourteenth century existing even in representations. Most of the tsubas on the older swords are much more modern than the blades to which they are attached. In the olden times, when the Samurai fell into evil days, he sometimes stripped off and sold the rich embellishments of his sword, retaining only the trusty blade.

Kaneiye, who worked about the end of the fourteenth century, is regarded as the first maker of tsubas artistically ornamented.

In the fifteenth century were produced many iron tsubas decorated with saw-cut silhouettes of birds, leaves, or animals, and with hammer or punch marks. Those last were probably the work of armourers, as in the case of Nobuiye of the Miochin family, whose iron tsubas were greatly valued. Some of these are of open-work, some with heads or masks in relief, others with punch marks. Another of the most famous workers in iron is Umetada, who lived about the middle of the seventeenth century.

Another of the fathers of the art was Goto

Yujo, the founder of the Goto school, who lived between 1434 and 1512, and often worked from the designs of the painter Kano Motonobu. By this school, it is said, was introduced the peculiar ground of raised dots known as manako, or fish roe ground, and also the free use of gold, the excess of which marred so much their later work.

To the sixteenth century belong most of the beautiful specimens of saw-cut work in iron, chrysanthemums, kiri, and other crests being the favourite motives, though a number of conventional floral designs showing a strong Portuguese influence are also found.

In the early part of the seventeenth century the use of enamel in the ornament of the tsuba was introduced by Hirata Donin, and continued to be characteristic of the work of the Hirata family till the present century.

The time which produced much of the finest work of all is known as the Joken-in period, 1681-1708—the rule of the Shogun Tokugawa Tsuneyoshi—perhaps the most famous artist being Somin, who worked largely from the designs of the Kano painter Hanabusa Itcho. About this time the wonderful palette of colours

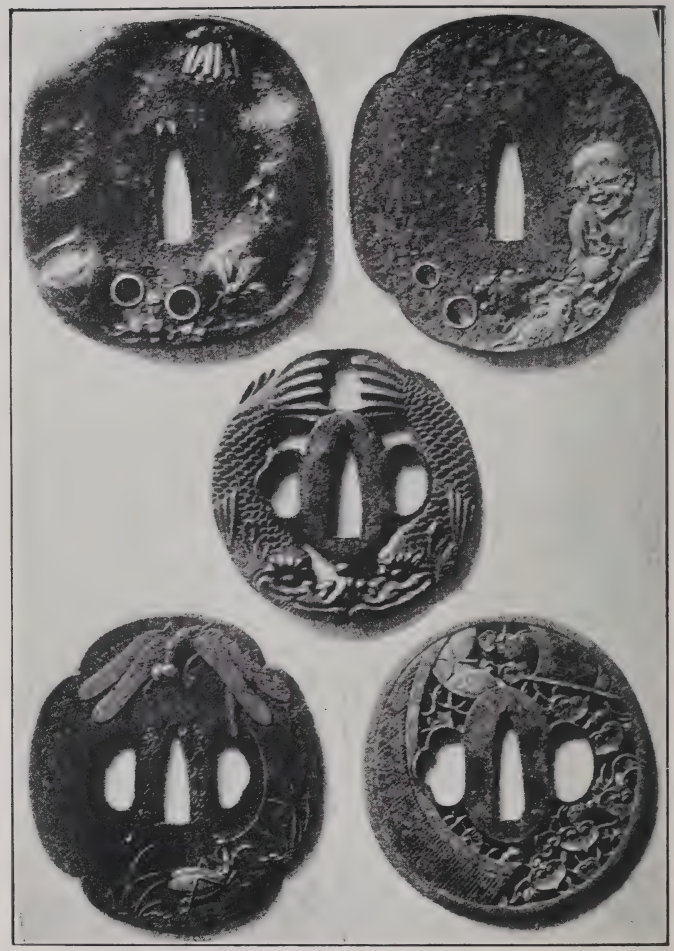
in metal came into full use, and the range of subjects became more and more varied. As in the case of netsuké, so in tsuba one may read the whole history, legends, and mythology of Japan.

But the art had now passed its zenith, and a gradual degeneration set in, the work produced in later years being rich and ornate, but lacking the distinction of the earlier schools.

A few words must be said of the kozuka, the handle of the small knife, called the ko-katana, which is sheathed in the scabbard of the wakizashi, or short sword. The kozuka contains much beautiful ornamentation, and from its more sheltered position this is often of greater delicacy than that applied to the tsuba. The manner in which the problem of filling the long, narrow field is solved is a perpetual source of charm to the student of design.

The fuchi, or ferule, at the lower end of the handle of the sword, and the kashira, its lozenge-shaped cap, are also finely ornamented, the two combined usually forming one design.

South Kensington Museum has a varied collection of sword furniture, including many fine specimens, but, unfortunately, probably from lack



A GROUP OF TSUBAS

(*From the Collection of Mr M. Tomkinson*)

of space, the objects are arranged in tall cases placed so closely face to face as to render the study of their contents almost impossible without the help of a candle.

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CHAPTER VI

KERAMICS

THOUGH the golden period of Japanese Keramic art was attained during the Tokugawa dynasty, 1603-1868, yet its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity. An interesting passage in an old Japanese chronicle shows that in the times of the Emperor Suwinin, about the beginning of the Christian era, the craft of the potter was the recognised industry of certain tribes. After giving an account of the death and burial of the Mikado's brother the record proceeds:

"On this they assembled those who had been in his immediate service, and buried them all upright round his sepulchre alive. For many days they died not, but day and night wept and cried. At last they died and rotted. Dogs and crows assembled and ate them. The Mikado, hearing the sound of their weeping and crying, felt saddened and pained in his heart. He commanded all his high officers

saying: 'It is a very painful matter to force those whom we have loved during life to follow us in death, and though it is an ancient custom why follow it if it be bad? From now and henceforth plan so as to stop causing men to follow the dead.' On the death of the Empress, some time afterwards, the Emperor called his advisers together, and asked them: 'What shall be done in the case of the present burying?' Thereupon Nomi-no-Sukune advanced, and said: 'It is not good to bury living men standing at the sepulchre of a prince, and this cannot be handed down to posterity. I pray leave now to propose a convenient plan, and to lay this before the sovereign.' And he sent messengers to summon up a hundred of the clay-workers' tribe of the country of Idzumo, and he himself directed the men of the clay-workers' tribe in taking clay and forming shapes of men, horses, and various things, and presented them to the Mikado, saying: 'From now and henceforth let it be the law for posterity to exchange things of clay for living men, and set them up in sepulchres.'"

The result of Mr W. Gowland's excavations of the dolmens, or burial mounds, which date

from about 200 B.C. to 600 A.D., has been the discovery of a great deal of the ancient pottery—coarse ware unglazed and unpainted, and decorated only with simple patterns of lines incised in the clay while soft. The shapes, however, are often graceful and pleasing. In the dolmens were also found the rude terra-cotta figures of men above referred to.

For many centuries the art of the potter remained in very much the same primitive condition. A coarse ware sufficed for the domestic utensils of the common people, and lacquered vessels supplied the wants of the more luxurious. There is, indeed, mention of Korean potters having been brought over to Japan after the Empress Jingo's victorious campaign, and it is said that the art of glazing was practised at Hizen in the eighth century.

Little real advance, however, was made till the thirteenth century, when Kato Shirazayemon, better known as Toshiro, a native of Seto in Owari, and the father of Japanese pottery, appears. Dissatisfied with the results of the native kilns he visited China in 1223 to study the methods practised there, and after six years' absence returned to Seto. His pottery is a

brown stoneware of firm and dense texture, and is covered with a glaze of a deep rich brown, sometimes mottled, altogether a great advance on the previous product of the country. The vessels made by him, mostly cha-ire, or tea-jars, used in the tea ceremony, are now valued at fabulous prices by the Japanese dilettante.

A certain authority states that Japanese history has been denominated by three factors : the sword, the tea-cup, and the paper house. The effects of the first and the last have been already indicated, and a few words here as to the second may not be out of place.

Legend ascribes a supernatural origin to the tea-plant. The Buddhist saint Daruma, he who sat wrapt in meditation for eight long years so that he quite lost the use of his lower limbs, once at his devotions was overpowered by sleep. On awakening, filled with shame at his frailty, he took a pair of scissors, and, snipping off the offending eyelids, cast them indignantly from him. They took root where they fell, and from them sprang a plant whose leaves had the magic quality of driving away sleep from weary eyes. In the temples it was much valued by the holy

men, and a certain degree of ceremony or ritual attended its use.

It was in the time of Yoshimasa, in the fifteenth century, that the cha-no-yu, or tea ceremony, began to assume public importance. In his peaceful retirement, surrounded by artists and philosophers, it was practised by the ex-Shogun. The priest Shuko drew up a code of its rules, characterised by a severe and dignified simplicity. The room used was small, and plain to bareness, the utensils were unornamented, but, though to the ordinary eye crude and rough, were much prized by the connoisseur. Indeed, Yoshimasa often rewarded important services not by a grant of land but by the gift of a valued tea-jar.

A hundred years later Hideyoshi revived the ceremony, and its rules were revised by the famous philosopher Rikiu, the greatest of all the Cha-jin, or tea professors. Rikiu considered that the essentials of the tea ceremony were: "Purity, peacefulness, reverence, and abstraction." "It was important for the guest to come with clean hands, but much more so with a clean heart." Social rank was ignored: those present took rank according to their standing

and reputation as Cha-jin. The most perfect courtesy and politeness governed all the proceedings. Frivolous or worldly talk was forbidden, and the conversation chiefly turned on the merit of the kakemono adorning the room, the flower decoration hanging before it, and the implements used in the ceremony.

A special ware was used for the tea-bowls termed Raku ware. It is said first to have been made by a Kioto potter Ameya from a design by Rikiu, and so delighted Hideyoshi that he presented the maker with a gold seal, with the characters "Raku" (enjoyment) inscribed upon it, with permission to use it as a stamp. The ware is soft and porous, and covered with a thick, soft glaze. Not turned on the wheel but shaped by hand, it is rough and uneven in shape, and usually bears no ornamentation. Coarse and unsightly and rough as it may appear to the uninitiated, to the eye of the connoisseur it possesses many beauties; its irregular shape is comfortable to the hand, its soft glaze pleasant to the lips, and is said even to impart a flavour to the tea.

As the relaxation of the most cultured of the land, the tea ceremony had effects of far-reaching

importance. As a corrective to the military spirit its glorification of the gentler virtues was invaluable, and to it in no small degree it is said the Japanese owe their character as the most courteous nation in the world. In art, though most strongly felt in the field of Keramics, its influence extended widely, affecting to no small extent the various branches of the minor decorative arts, and dominating, almost in a sense creating, the arts of landscape gardening and flower arrangement.

With Hideyoshi's revival of the tea ceremony, and the importation of Korean potters, the real history of Japanese Keramic art begins. Kilns were founded in many different parts of the country, and as each produced its own distinctive ware the development of these local art industries can best be traced separately.

The province of Hizen, lying in the south of the island of Kiushu, and the nearest point of the Korean mainland being only some two hundred miles away, it is natural that here the borrowed industry should first take root.

The most ancient kiln was erected at Karatzu as early as the seventh century, and a hundred years later glazing was there used for the first

time in Japan. So famous did the Karatzu ware become that Karatzu-mono, "things of Karatzu," became the current name for all sorts of pottery. The Old Karatzu ware, however, was coarse and rough in quality, though some of its rich brown glazes were not without beauty.

In the sixteenth century Gorodayu Shonzui visited China and learned the art of making porcelain, and on his return to Japan brought a quantity of the clay with him. On the supply being exhausted, however, the manufacture stopped.

After Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea, towards the end of the century, many captives were brought back, including a Korean potter, Risampei, who discovered on the hills of Hizen a clay suitable for the making of porcelain. Kilns were erected, and the new manufacture started in earnest.

When the Dutch traders dealt with the port of Nagasaki the chief article of their export was the porcelain ware of Arita — known as Imari ware, from which port it was shipped to Nagasaki.

It is this ware that was distributed through Europe and gave the first and totally erroneous

idea of the Keramic art of Japan. For the "Old Japan" ware, as it is called, was deliberately manufactured to suit the vulgar taste of the barbarous foreigner, who demanded copious and crowded decoration. It is almost ludicrous to compare it with the ware manufactured at the same time for home use. The one, the work of the artist Kakiyemon, is decorated with dainty and graceful designs, which in their reticence and simplicity are the embodiment of good taste; the other is quite un-Japanese in style, the ornament crowded and overloaded with colour, and often a mere gaudy jumble. But the "Old Japan" ware formed the models for half the factories of Europe, and we only need to turn to the Old Crown Derby porcelain to find its atrocities repeated with ludicrous fidelity.

In 1660 Prince Nabeshima established a kiln at Okawachi. It was reserved for the finest porcelain only, which was made for his private use, the sale being prohibited. Beautiful ware with a fine blue under the glaze was the chief product, and at a later date fragile imitations of flowers were made, of wonderful delicacy.

Another famous factory of Hizen is that at

1. Large Plate, Kutani ware (purple, blue, and green, on yellow ground).
2. Plate, Imari ware (design by Kakiyemon, red, blue, green, and yellow, on white ground).
3. Plate, Nabeshima ware (blue, on white ground).

A GROUP OF PORCELAIN

(*British Museum*)

Mikawachi, where the Hirado ware, perhaps the finest of all Japanese porcelains, was produced. The factory was founded towards the end of the sixteenth century, and its first manufacture was an earthenware covered with a blue-grey glaze. In 1712, however, the discovery of fine porcelain stone was made in the vicinity, and in 1751 Matsura, the feudal chief of Hirado, took the kiln under his patronage, and for the next hundred years the ware may be assigned the first place among Japanese porcelains; for not only is the ground a pure and clear white, but the paté, free from gritty particles, is of a fineness of texture which is not possessed by other similar wares. With rare exceptions blue is the only colour used in its decoration, not the deep Chinese blue nor yet the rather weak tint of Nabeshima, but a delicate shade between the two. The favourite decorative motive was a scene with pine-trees and children at play. In ware of the finest quality seven children were introduced, in the second quality five, and in the third three. Many charming pieces were also made in plain white ware with pierced patterns or designs in relief, and at a later date the factory became famous for a delicate blue-and-white eggshell

porcelain. Since 1830, however, the wares of the factory have declined greatly in quality.

Until within the last forty years the Keramic arts of Japan were only known to Europe by their porcelain, and only crude and inferior specimens of that, but the pottery and faience which merited even more attention were utterly unheard of. Since then matters have changed very much, and the faience of Satsuma is now the most sought after of all Japanese wares. But though Old Satsuma ware has become almost a household word, and there are few collections but boast of a specimen or two, the bulk of these objects are more or less clever imitations of a later date, excellent often in themselves, but not the rare and wonderful old Satsuma with its soft, ivory tint and its almost imperceptibly crackled glaze.

The original kiln appears to have been founded by Prince Shimazu Yoshihiro, chief of Satsuma, on his return from the Korean expedition, from which be brought back seventeen skilled Korean potters. In 1598 a kiln was opened close to his castle at Chosa, in the neighbouring province of Hiuga, which manufactured chiefly objects for the tea ceremony not unlike those

previously made at Seto; but the glazes were of many varieties and very beautiful, some of them being exceedingly rich and brilliant. Prince Yoshihiro took great interest in the manufactory, settling handsome annuities on the most skilful potters, and stamping the finest pieces of work with his own seal.

In the year 1618 Boku, one of the original seventeen Korean potters, discovered in Satsuma a fine white clay or sand and other materials suitable for the manufacture of a finer quality of faience, and the result was a great improvement in the ware.

In 1630 the kilns were removed to Nawashiro, and by 1675 the ware had reached a high degree of excellence. About this time Tangen, a pupil of the great Kano painter Tanyu, was employed to paint or furnish designs for the potters, and Satsuma Tangen now constitutes one of the greatest treasures of the Japanese connoisseur. The decoration of such pieces as remain is slight and sketchy, the designs usually landscape, bird, and floral subjects, and the colours few and simple, often a reddish brown only being used.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century

two Satsuma potters, Hoko of the Tatsumonji factory and Chiubei of the Tadeno factory, were sent by Shimazu Tomonobu, the chief of the clan, to travel all over Japan, visiting the different factories and learning the processes used in each. They visited Hizen, Kioto, Bizen, Owari, and other places, and particularly seem to have profited by their insight into the methods used in the production of the enamelled faience of Awata, for after their return, in 1795, may be dated a large increase in the manufacture of enamelled Satsuma faience, Nishiki-de, and it is this faience that is so widely known and valued as Old Satsuma.

The characteristics of this beautiful ware may be briefly noted. The paté is close as pipeclay and almost as firm and hard as porcelain. The chalky, porous nature of the newer work at once proclaims its late date. The old glaze is soft, lustrous, and mellow, with an exceedingly fine crackle. The decoration is simple, chiefly diapers and floral subjects in comparatively few colours, and the pieces are invariably small—tripod incense burners of about seven inches high being, perhaps, the largest objects. The large examples profusely decorated with human figures, peacocks,

and other designs, are all of later date belonging to the period of forgeries which set in with the great increase of European trade after 1868.

Of imitations there are many varieties. But first it may be mentioned that, prior to 1868, undecorated white faience was largely made at Satsuma, which was afterwards decorated at Tokio, but the refiring necessary completely takes away, in most cases, the distinctive and beautiful qualities of the crackled glaze.

The rarity of Old Satsuma ware may be judged from the fact that the average number of genuine pieces offered for sale in Japan during the last fifteen years has probably not been more than ten, and not more than half of these have left the country.

Though the Satsuma faience has the distinction of being the most beautiful ware produced in Japan, it is in association with the Kioto factories that we find most of the great names of Japanese Keramics—Ninsei, Kenzan, and Hozen.

The wares of Kioto may be divided into three classes: first, the Old Raku ware used in the tea ceremony; second, the decorated faience of Awata and the neighbouring kilns; and third,

the porcelain which was the product of the early part of the nineteenth century.

During the civil wars which preceded the Tokugawa period the city of Kioto, though the seat of the Imperial Court, dwindled rapidly in importance; even the Mikado and his Kugé, or Court nobles, lived in dire poverty. Its tide of prosperity did not turn until the seventeenth century, and it is with the advent of Nomura Seisuke (also called Seiyemon and Seibei) that the great period begins. His native place was Ninwaji, near Kioto, and, taking the first syllable of that name and adding to it the first syllable of his own, he adopted the name Ninsei, with which he stamped his work.

As already described, the porcelain makers at Hizen had learned the secret of vitrifiable enamels as early as 1620, but it was guarded by them most jealously. It is said, however, that between 1650 and 1655 Kurobei, a Kioto dealer in porcelain, obtained the precious secret from an Aritu potter, Aoyama Koemon. The miserable man was immediately put to death by his irate lord; but the secret was out, and passed from the dealer to Ninsei, to the great future benefit of Japan. He applied it to the

decoration of faience with the most excellent results, for his taste and skill as a decorative artist were unrivalled among his contemporaries, and to his influence may be traced many of the most charming developments of later years.

A man of birth, he was not actually a potter by profession, and had, therefore, no fixed workshop, working at the factories of Awata, Iwakura, and Mizoro. He seems to have made no secret of the processes he had mastered, but gladly imparted them to those with whom he came in contact, and to this fact is doubtless due the rapid rise in the quality and increase in the output of the Kioto ware.

A word as to the Kioto kilns, which were all within a radius of a few miles, may be here advisable. The best known were Awata, Iwakura, and Mizoro; the others were grouped together under the general term Kyomizu.

Ninsei's faience is almost worthy to compare with the best ware of Satsuma, but is marked by a slightly darker colour, and is a trifle fragile in appearance, lacking the firm solidity of the Satsuma ware. Its crackle is fine and beautifully regular, giving the appearance of a covering of fine netting. His glazes range from a metallic

black to a pearl white, through which a pink flush seems to spread.

His designs for decoration are simple and chaste, and the clear, pale greens and blues and rich reds of his enamels are of exquisite quality.

After Ninsei's death the next great name at Awata is that of Ogata Shinsei, or Kenzan, a younger brother of the still more famous Ogata Korin, painter and lacquerer, perhaps the greatest decorative artist Japan has produced. Kenzan was also a decorator of great power and originality. In complete contrast to the delicate harmonies of Ninsei, his designs are rough and bold, but his colour is superb and his decorative sense unerring. His work was at first confined to the coarser wares of the cha-no-yu, and here the singular force of his decoration harmonises well with the rude shapes, rough earthenware, and rich glazes, so that the Kenzan Raku ware is indeed a thing of beauty. But in faience he had equally great success. Once seen, his style can be recognised anywhere; a rough sketch of a landscape, a branch in blossom, a flight of birds, or the conventional shape of a flower, dashed in with seeming carelessness, but each

touch placed in exactly the right spot for decorative fitness. A very fine specimen of his work —a brown pot decorated with an extremely rich design of peacock's feathers, blue-green and purple—may be seen in the British Museum.

The third great name of the Kioto group is that of Nishimura Zengoro, by Keramists known as Hozen. Born towards the end of the eighteenth century, he was one of a long line of potters. In 1801-3 he studied at the Awata factory, and soon his celadon and blue-and-white porcelain became celebrated. His fame attracted the notice of the feudal chief of Kiushu, who, in 1827, invited him to his province, and built a kiln for him in his private park, at which he produced the well-known ware called, from its stamp, Kairaku-en ware. Zengoro had made a special study of glazes, and the great beauty of this ware is the rich harmony of purple, blue, and yellow glazes which he obtained.

His versatility is shown by another ware which has an equally high reputation—the "Eiraku," or Kinrande (scarlet and gold brocade style). This is a porcelain ware of great delicacy and beauty, and usually made only in small pieces. The ground is of a soft coral red, upon which

is traced a wealth of decoration in gold, with here and there a mass of rich blue.

Of the many other well-known names remaining among the Kioto potters only passing mention can be made. In many families the same stamp was used by one generation after another, rendering it difficult to distinguish their individual work.

The Kinkozan, Hozan, Taizan, and Tanzan families carried the traditions of Ninsei in Awata faience right down to the present day; while in the beginning of the nineteenth century the Dohachi family and the Kyomizu potter Rokubei followed in their decoration the newer naturalistic school. Mention must also be made of Shuhei and Kantei, potters of the end of the eighteenth century, who are regarded as the most eminent masters of the little Japanese tea-pot, or kuisu, and also of their contemporary Mokubei, a potter of so great ability that it is a pity he confined himself almost entirely to imitations of Chinese and other wares.

The history of the founding of the Kaga factories, which turned out the Kutani ware, is interesting and curious. Maeda Toshiharu, feudal lord of Daishoji, having discovered a bed of fine

1. Tea Jar, by Toshiro I.
2. Tea Bowl—Raku Ware.
3. Tea Bowl after Ninsei.
4. Tea Bowl—Omuru, Kioto.
5 and 6. Tea Bowls, by Kenzan.
7. Kairaku-en Ware.
8. Kioto Ware.
9. Soma Ware.
10. Yatsushiro Ware.
11. Bizen Ware.
12. Banko Ware.

A GROUP OF VARIOUS WARES

(*British Museum*)

porcelain stone near Kutani, established a kiln about 1650, under the charge of two well-known potters—Tamura Gonzaemon and Goto Saijiro; but the venture was not a success owing to the lack of knowledge of the workers. Not to be outdone, Saijiro went to Hizen to learn there the secrets of porcelain making. The only way in which he was able to do this was by becoming a permanent member of the community. The manner in which he accomplished this was peculiar. He took service in the house of a potter, married a woman of the district, and worked there for several years. When he had learned all there was to learn he calmly deserted wife and family, and fled home to Kaga, where he imparted the needed information. Shortly after this time, about 1664, the Kutani potters were turning out wares of great beauty and individuality.

Of these there were several kinds—the first, Ao-Kutani, was so called from the deep green glaze (ao = green) which was largely used in its decoration; and other glazes—yellow, purple, and soft Prussian blue—made up a rich, low-toned harmony of great beauty. In the second class of ware the Arita style of decoration was followed, except that the Kutani potter used

blue under the glaze very seldom, and only in subordinate positions. Their chief colours were red—a soft, dull, rich colour varying from Indian red to a russet brown—and yellow, purple, and blue, supplemented by silver and gold.

Their designs were largely made by Morikaga, a pupil of Tanyu—landscapes, birds, and flowers being the chief subjects.

A third famous ware of Kutani, which may be termed the red Kutani as distinguished from the green, had a ground of rich red, with diapers or medallions decorated in yellow, green, purple, and red enamels. Another style had the ground entirely of red, to which designs were applied in silver and gold, light green, and sometimes yellow and purple enamels.

For some reason the activity of the Kutani factory only continued for about sixty years, and during the next hundred years there followed a period of inaction. In the middle of the nineteenth century the manufacture was revived, both the red and the green Old Kutani wares being imitated, but with doubtful success. The modern colours, especially in the case of the red, lack the softness of the old, and are, comparatively speaking, harsh and glaring.

In 1827, at Edamachi Kanazawa, a kiln was founded which produced a beautiful faience known as Ohi-yaki, which is characterised by enamelled decoration of great delicacy and refinement.

The foregoing are the most important of the old Keramic arts, for the most distinguished products of the pre-Meji days may be summed up as the porcelain of Hizen and Kutani and the faience of Satsuma and Kioto.

A number of wares of lesser importance remain, chief among these being the Owari wares.

It will be remembered that it was to Seto in Owari that Toshiro returned after his visit to China in the thirteenth century, and founded the industry which entitles him to the name of "The Father of Japanese Pottery." But from that time till the beginning of the nineteenth century little change took place in the character of the Seto wares, which continued to be stoneware and earthenware vessels, and little else. About 1801, however, a Seto potter visited Hizen, and after studying in the factories there returned, and founded a porcelain manufactory in Seto. Soon they attained great proficiency in the production of a blue-and-white ware which rivalled the products of Hizen. Their large

pieces were particularly fine examples of firing, the technical difficulties to be overcome being enormous. The quality, however, of this ware rapidly deteriorated after 1850.

At about the same time a soft-crackled faience was made at Nagoya by a potter called Toyosuke. It is a soft-crackled faience of the Raku type, covered on the inside with a greenish white glaze decorated with bold floral designs, and on the outside with a thin coat of lacquer.

And now, for the remaining smaller branches of the industry a passing mention must suffice.

In the province of Bizen was manufactured a curious hard stoneware of a bluish grey colour, which chiefly took the form of vigorously modelled figures of gods, men, animals, and birds. Indeed, in the Bizen stoneware you find repeated in another form, but with the same vigour and originality, the achievements of the netsuké carver and the tsuba worker—Hotei, the pot-bellied god of contentment, being a favourite subject for treatment.

At Ise a wealthy amateur named Gozayemon founded a kiln in 1736, executing a ware which was known as Ko Banko. In the beginning of the nineteenth century a potter, Mori Yusetsu,

conceived the idea of imitating this old ware. The imitator, however, was a much better artist than his prototype, and soon the new Banko ware was both widely different from, and of a much finer quality than, the old. This ware was worked on a mould, which was placed inside the article, and the clay pressed in with the fingers, the mould being afterwards removed in sections. The decoration was vigorous and artistic, consisting often of dragons, storks, etc., in relief.

In Higo a very beautiful ware called Yatsushiro was made. It is a dense faience coated with a film of pale grey clay by immersion in slip; the design, usually a delicate diaper, is then engraved and the lines filled in with white clay—the whole being covered with a finely-crackled glaze.

Mention must be made also of the beautiful eggshell ware of Mino—delicate little saké cups and other vessels encased in envelopes of bamboo basket-work; and also of the Fujina ware of Idzumo—a faience decorated with beautifully executed designs of insects.

At Nakamura, in Iwaki, a kiln was opened in 1650, and here the ware known as Soma

ware was produced. It is said that the Kano painter Naonobu, drew as a crest for Soma Yoshitane the galloping horse which in varying forms is seen on almost every piece of this ware.

Other lesser kilns are too numerous to mention, and existed in almost every province.

The British Museum possesses a good and varied collection of Japanese Keramic ware, but, unfortunately, the lack of a catalogue and the absence of any systematic arrangement, or even of proper labelling, takes away much from its usefulness to the student.

CHAPTER VII

LACQUER

The most wonderful of all Japanese arts is their lacquer-work, and, perhaps, in this more completely than in any other medium does the peculiar genius of Japan find expression. For the combination of qualities required for the production of a piece of fine lacquer are such as could have been found in no other people. And it comes to us with a shock of surprise that this work, so free and spontaneous and yet so delicate, is wrought in, perhaps, the most difficult and intractable material ever used by man, and built up slowly and by infinitesimal stages, layer by layer, through weeks and months of labour.

Even were the same brilliant faculty of design the gift of the European, the amazing and unfaltering precision of hand, and the limitless patience and unceasing care required by the technical processes, place lacquer-work far be-

yond his scope. It is only the Eastern who can combine the imagination of the artist with the technical powers and steady perseverance of the ant or the bee. For, indeed, in examining one of these marvellous Japanese works, so full of exquisite detail, so perfect in every part, one is irresistibly reminded of the honeycombs which form the monument of the humble insect worker; but where the one is the repetition of a single design fixed unalterably the other is free and spontaneous, the product of an ever-varying fancy.

It is difficult to imagine anything more perfect than a piece of really fine lacquer—the smooth, translucent surface pleasant even to the sense of touch; the design simple and slight, and sensitively placed so as to cause the blank spaces to form essential parts of the composition; and the whole glowing with soft gold of varying tints, or, perhaps, relieved with a boldly inlaid piece of mother-of-pearl, flashing with its brilliant irridescent hues.

To one who has seen specimens of the finest work — the glorious lacquer of old Japan — the words of the French critic, M. Louis Gonse, exaggerated though they may seem to

the uninitiated, appear no more than a mere statement of fact: "Japanese lacquered objects," he says, "are the most perfect works that have ever issued from the hands of man."

But specimens of really fine lacquer are rarely to be seen outside Japan, where they are treasured in the collections of the wealthy. The British Museum possesses hardly anything which is really fine, South Kensington only a few small pieces. The bulk of the fine lacquer in this country is divided between a few private collections, chief among which is that of Mr M. Tomkinson at Franche Hall, near Kidderminster—a marvellous collection, rich in examples of all periods, and containing many exquisite pieces of work.

Though tradition says that lacquer-work was known in Japan as early as 392 B.C. it is supposed that the art, like others, came originally from China. At first its uses were purely utilitarian. Drinking-vessels were coated with lacquer to render them water-tight, and as the surface was hard as glass, and withstood considerable heat, it was also used largely for cooking and other household utensils. Indeed, this explains the slow development of the potter's art

in Japan, for where we would use glass or earthenware the Japanese used lacquered vessels. The armour of an old Japan warrior was often leather coated with lacquer; the sword was in a lacquered scabbard. He ate off a lacquered tray, drank out of a lacquered cup, and rode in a lacquered carriage.

The lac is a natural product—the gum exuded by the urushi-tree (*rhus vernicifera*), a species of sumach. The finest lac of all was obtained from very old trees; but, as the tapping and drawing of the sap resulted in the death of the tree, the supply had to be continually renewed, and so in mediæval times landowners were compelled by law to plant annually a certain number of trees, and the export of lac was strictly forbidden. Even the Dutch traders of Nagasaki were not allowed to include it in their shiploads of porcelain and other wares, with the exception of a few pieces of inferior quality, specially manufactured, like the Imari ware, for the European market. It is safe to say that until the Paris Exhibition of 1867 no really fine lacquer had ever been seen in Europe.

At what date lacquer began first to be ornamented is unknown. The earliest known

examples are preserved in the Todaiji and Shosoin temples at Nara, and date from the sixth and eighth centuries, and by the tenth century some very fine work had been produced. It was not, however, until the seventeenth century, when the country, under the firm hand of the Tokugawa Shogun Iyeyasu, after centuries of turmoil and civil war, had settled down to a peaceful existence that the period of the great lacquer workers set in. For in lacquer, as in many of the minor arts, the Tokugawa period marked the highest point of excellence. In the households of the wealthy Daimios the artist was freed from the more sordid cares of life. He need take no thought for the morrow, what he should eat or what he should drink, but could give his whole life to his art. And it was by the quality of his work, and not by the quantity, that he was judged. He had no idea of increasing his output in order to double his returns, but would spend months of labour on an object no larger than a few inches square. The larger pieces of work, exquisitely wrought outside and inside, the more delicate work being reserved for the inside, as there less liable to damage, in many cases represent the work of years.

For the process is long and tedious, and bristling with technical difficulties. First the wooden foundation for the box or other object to be lacquered is made of specially selected wood, generally a hard wood called by the Japanese hi-no-ki, which is not liable to warp, and admits of a very fine finish. These wooden objects are examples of beautiful cabinet making, often little thicker than cardboard, but fitting with great exactness. This foundation is strengthened with a layer of thin hempen cloth, and after laying on one or two preliminary coatings of a sort of paste mixed with lacquer, and carefully grinding down on a whetstone to ensure a perfectly smooth and even surface, the object is ready for the lacquering proper.

With a flat, short-haired brush—the hair used being generally human hair—the coating of lacquer is laid on in a thin, even layer, and the object set aside to dry, the period required for this varying from twelve hours to several days. Lacquer has this peculiar quality, that it dries best in a damp atmosphere, the moisture in the air seeming to draw out that in the lacquer. The articles are, therefore, placed to dry in a damp cupboard. On removal from the cupboard the surface is then

OUTSIDE OF LID OF SUZURI-BAKO OR WRITING-CASE

In Green, Gold, and Silver, on Black Ground. Koma, Early 18th Century

(*From the Collection of Mr M. Tomkinson*)

carefully smoothed and polished by rubbing with charcoal. Coating after coating is added in this way, the final polishings being made with a fine ash of calcined deer's horn, applied with the fingers.

Such are the complicated processes in the production of a piece of plain, unornamented black lacquer—the number of separate operations being no fewer than thirty-three, each one requiring the greatest skill and care; while for the production of one of the more elaborately ornamented pieces the number may extend to sixty or more, for the methods of decoration are many and varied, several being frequently applied to the same piece of work.

First of all we have the varieties of carved lacquer. There was the old Kamakura lacquer, in which the wood was first carved, then covered with a foundation of black lacquer, to which a red surface was added. In tsuishu and tsuikoku, carved red and black lacquer respectively, the article was first thickly coated with lacquer and afterwards carved. The process is said to have been invented by a Kioto workman in the fifteenth century, and in the time of Iyeyasu an artist, Heijuro, so excelled in it that he took the name Tsuishu Heijuro.

Chinkinbori is a form of incised lacquer, generally on a black ground. The lines are engraved with a rat's tooth, as being less easily blunted than a metal tool, and are usually filled in with gold. Ninomya Johei, a physician of Yedo in the eighteenth century, was especially famed for this work. Raden is a form of lacquer in which mother-of-pearl and other shells, either in irregular or shaped pieces, are largely used, the colour effects obtained being of great brilliancy. A form of raden called aogai, a mosaic of green or purple irridescent shell crushed small, is especially used for the decoration of sword scabbards.

Togidashi is a style in which no rigid outline is used, but the forms left soft and blurred, being brought out by a series of rubbings. The greatest masters of this class of work were Yamamoto Shunsho and Koma Kiuhaku.

A curious and interesting form is guri lacquer. Here many layers of different coloured lacquers are applied, and the surface is then carved with conventional designs, in deep V-shaped incisions, exposing the different layers of colour.

The most gorgeous of all, however, is gold lacquer, the generic term for which is makiye,

but this includes many varieties. In the same piece the gold will vary from solid masses standing up in relief to a dim, impalpable dust blending imperceptibly into the rich black ground. When the decoration is smooth and level with the ground it is termed hiramakiye, when in relief takamakiye. Kirikane is an inlay of small squares, hirakane or hirame an inlay of small pieces made from filings of gold flattened on an anvil. In okibirame, another inlay, the pieces are not dusted on but inserted singly by hand.

Giobu is a variety in which gold leaf is laid down on an irregular ground. This is covered with a deep red lacquer coloured with "dragon's blood." After drying the surface is rubbed down flat, and the gold is visible below, taking different tints according to its varying depth from the surface.

Nashiji (pear ground), one of the most famous styles, is a rich ground of powdered gold with the quality and texture of the rind of a ripe pear, and is largely used in conjunction with other forms of decoration.

A silver ground is also often used with charming effect. In Mr Tomkinson's collection two very fine pieces of silver lacquer by Goshin, a

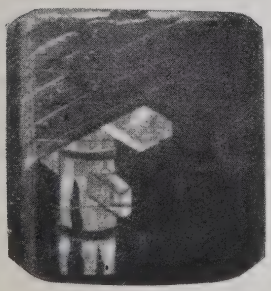
lacquerer of the eighteenth century, deserve special mention. The ground is of a dim, misty grey, and on this is depicted a landscape with fir-trees on black lacquer. The nearest trees stand out bold and clear, those farther off seem embedded in the mist.

Another style largely used for sword scabbards was samé-nuri, shark-skin lacquer. The skin of a species of ray was stretched over the surface, the rough nodules filed down partially, and the whole covered with black lacquer. On the lacquer being rubbed down smooth and polished the nodules show as white discs on a ground of black.

Such are a few of the leading styles of lacquer; but numberless variations exist, and one piece often includes work in several different styles.

As already pointed out, the use of lacquer was at first entirely utilitarian; its adaptation to the purposes of ornament belongs to a later date. Perhaps the first ornamental lacquer was that applied to sword scabbards, horse furniture, and other warlike trappings. With the growth of a more peaceful civilisation came its application to the arts of peace.

A very favourite object for the lacquerer is



1. Cock and Flowers (in gold and shell on brown ground). Kajikawa, 18th century.

2. Flowers and Paper Packets for Perfumes (ivory and gold, on black ground). Kajikawa, 19th century.

3. Pier of Bridge (in gold and shell, on black ground). By Kwoyetsu (Korin's master).

4. Well overshadowed by Tree (gold and shell on black ground). Kajikawa, 18th century.

A GROUP OF INRO

(*From the Collection of Mr M. Tomkinson*)

the inro or medicine-box—a little box made in three or four separate sections and hung from the girdle by a cord. On the small surface here available he lavished all the resources of his art, and in inro we find many of the finest specimens of lacquer work. Indeed, few things are more beautiful than a fine inro, with its rich but exquisitely judged ornamentation, for the Japanese artist possesses in a marvellous degree the power of working on a small field without loss of power or dignity. Even a specimen in plain black lacquer, unornamented, is a thing of beauty, pleasing to touch and to handle, and so perfectly made that the divisions between the sections are often invisible until they are pulled apart. This perfection of fitting is one of the tests by which the work of the old masters can be distinguished from that of their modern imitators.

Of the larger pieces of work the chief is the suzuri-bako, or set of writing materials. Then we have the jisshu kobako, or implements of the perfume game, comprising a cabinet containing the koro or miniature brazier, the kobako or perfume-box, fuda-bako or counter-box, and several other articles; and the sagé-ju, or

portable picnic case, containing boxes, trays for sweetmeats, saké bottle, and so on.

Japanese authorities divide the history of lacquer into four eras—that of Nara, prior to 784 A.D.; Heian, 784-1185; Nanbokucho and Ashikaga, 1397-1587; Toyotomi and Tokugawa, 1597-1867. Of the earlier lacquerers little is known. In the fifteenth century, during the reign of the Ashikaga Shoguns, fine work was produced by Igarashi, the first of a line of lacquerers of that name. Little progress was made, however, until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when, after years of strife, the turbulent Daimios were finally subdued by Iyeyasu, the first of the Tokugawa Shoguns, and the country entered on a period of peaceful development. Towards the end of the seventeenth century began to rise the first of the great lacquerers, whose works are still the envy and wonder of their successors.

As in other branches of art, the traditions of this craft were handed down from father to son, and certain families became famed for lacquer. Two stand out especially as masters in the art—the Koma and the Kajikawa families.

The Komas were Court lacquerers for more

than two hundred years, the first of the family, Koma Kiui, who died in 1663, being lacquerer to the Shogun Iyemitsu, and the line lasted until the nineteenth century.

The rise of the Kajikawa family was somewhat later; the first, Kajikawa Kujiro, one of the most excellent artists in lacquer, and famous for his giobu nashiji, lived about the end of the eighteenth century. He also was followed by a line of famous artists.

Both the Koma and the Kajikawa families were especially famous as inro-makers, and in this branch of the art it is difficult to say which was the greater. The Koma were remarkable for their coloured decorations, in which the design looked at by oblique light appears to be of gold but by direct light shows in brilliant colour.

One of the earliest lacquerers of whom there is any record is Honami Koyetsu, 1590-1637. Korin is said to have founded his style on that of Koyetsu, whose work certainly resembles to some extent that of the later and more famous artist. In Mr Tomkinson's collection are two inros by Koyetsu and Korin respectively, each decorated with the same design—the pier of a

bridge in mother-of-pearl and gold—and treated in an almost identical manner.

The greatest of all names in lacquer is that of Ogata Korin, born 1660, died 1716. As a painter he is entitled to a place among the highest, but as a lacquerer he stands alone. His absolute originality and boldness of conception, his masterly instinct in design, and his splendid draughtsmanship are seen equally in his lacquer as in his paintings, but it is in his lacquer only that his unrivalled decorative powers find their fullest scope.

If the Japanese decorative artist has a fault it is that he is too pictorial in his methods, that he is almost invariably endeavouring to tell a story. But Korin does not lacquer like a painter, he paints like a lacquerer. He is first of all boldly and frankly decorative—the literary appeal is secondary. And though to one not thoroughly in sympathy with the artist there is much in his work that appears obscure or unintelligible, to the eye of the enthusiast these "obscurities" are splendid and triumphant pieces of decoration. Mere prettiness appealed little to Korin, but his work has on this account the greater dignity. Even when at first sight it

startles and almost repels it soon grows on one; the longer one looks the stonger is its fascination.

The breadth of his treatment is the amazing thing about Korin's work, large masses of mother-of-pearl, the body of a bird, for instance, being laid in boldly in one piece, as in the inro with cranes here reproduced. Metals also, such as lead and pewter, were used just as daringly. But in the refinements of his art Korin was equally great. His gold mat grounds were especially famous, and were imitated by many of his successors. They are characterised by a steady, rich, full tint with a glow in it, and vary from a silvery to a deep copper hue, and in texture from an impalpable dust to an inlay of square dice. Then from the solid mat the gold will thin out into the lacquer till lost in its depths. His bolder work earned the same sincere flattery of imitation, but the imitator can easily be detected. Mr Tomkinson's collection is especially rich in fine specimens of Korin's work, and through his courtesy I reproduce one or two characteristic examples.

Ritsuo, a pupil and contemporary of Korin, was born in 1663. Like his master, he was

celebrated in many branches of art; not only a lacquerer, he was a skilful metal worker, a carver, a potter, and a painter. In his more richly decorated lacquer, that known as hiaku-ho-kan (a hundred precious things inlaid), he often introduced pieces of his own pottery. His work is very distinctive, bold, and strong, with firm modelling and rich, full colouring. In his suzuri-bako he appears to special advantage; the outside of the box rough and bold, the inside enriched with work full of delicacy and refinement. One fine example in Mr Tomkinson's collection has the outside in rough wood, the grain being made more prominent by the soft parts having been eaten out with acid. In the centre the wood is cut away, and a figure of Daruma, in pottery, is inlaid. The inside of the lid is a complete contrast to the rudeness of the exterior, and is wrought with the utmost delicacy and beauty of finish.

Ritsuo's pupil Hanzan also did very fine work in a similar manner. South Kensington Museum possesses a very beautiful little inro from his hand, inlaid with fish in rose-tinted mother-of-pearl.

Of modern masters the most famous is Zeshin,

born in 1807, died in 1891, and both as a lacquerer and painter he was worthy to rank with his great predecessors. Zeshin is almost the only one of the moderns whose work could at all compare with that of the old masters, but he lived and died in poverty and obscurity.

Modern industrial conditions hardly admit of the same patient workmanship—months, and perhaps years, being expended on one article. Speedier results are required, and this causes the use of inferior but quicker drying lac, which has neither the beauty nor the durability of the finer quality. A proof of this was given after the Vienna Exhibition of 1872. The vessel which was taking back a number of pieces of lacquer, old and new, was wrecked off the coast of Japan. Eighteen months after the pieces were recovered, the new utterly ruined, but the old work entirely unharmed, bright and untarnished, as if fresh from the maker's hands.

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CHAPTER VIII

LANDSCAPE GARDENING AND THE ARRANGEMENT OF FLOWERS

No review of Japanese art, however superficial, can pass over without mention one of the most interesting of all its phases—the application of its conventions to the living and plastic forms of nature in the sister arts of landscape gardening and the arrangement of flowers. And here, as in other departments, the Japanese artist does not seek dully and slavishly to copy nature, but by a frank and dexterous use of these conventions he endeavours to suggest its spirit. By this departure from mere literal truth he attains a wider fidelity to nature. In the limited space at his disposal he knows that he cannot transplant a piece of natural scenery—he must work to scale—but his miniature rocks, trees, hills, and streams are so exquisitely proportioned as to express within the area of a few yards the breadth and expanse of nature.

So, too, in flower arrangement, the master secures the appearance of naturalness by the most careful and daring manipulation. Twigs and stems are twisted and broken, leaves and petals even shaped and cut, to produce the effect apparently so spontaneous, so free from artificiality.

And the reason is obvious. The defect or incongruity that would pass unnoticed amid the wealth and profusion of the living plant, balanced with superb ease by countless other points of interest so that the eye could not dwell on the deformity, when transferred to the narrower field of the flower vase, stands out with awful distinctness, and assumes an importance which formerly it did not possess. The artist dare not take the liberties which Nature allows herself. Her keyboard is limitless, but his harmonies must be built up of a few carefully selected chords.

The rise of both arts dates from that wonderful period of awakening—the coming of the Buddhist priests in the sixth century. The first gardens were those of the old Buddhist temples; the first flower arrangements were placed as offerings before their shrines.

Among the earliest examples of landscape

gardening were the temple groves of Biodo-In at Uji, and Todaiji and Kofukuji at Nara, and this old style of temple garden, simple and severe, was called Shinden-Shiki, but little is known regarding the details of its arrangement.

With the Kamakura period, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, we come to more familiar ground. Then the landscapes took a freer form—hills and valleys, lakes, streams, and waterfalls being represented. A curious form was the Kare-sansui, or dried-up water scenery, where the bed of a stream or the hollow of a lake was shown dry, as if in time of drought, and this style was usually combined with a bare mountain or moorland scene.

But a great impetus was given to the art when, in the fifteenth century, Yoshimasa, retiring from active life, and surrounded by a group of artists and sages, revived the ancient tea ceremony, and made it the nucleus of so many forms of art. The wide-reaching effects of this quaint ceremonial on art generally have already been indicated in a previous chapter. A special form of garden was devoted to its use; while also the art of flower arrangement

flourished for long merely as an adjunct of the cha-no-yu.

In the first group of Cha-jin, or tea professors, were Shuko (the teacher of Yoshimasa), Showo and the famous artists No-ami and Oguri Sotan; while a little later we have the names of Gei-ami, So-ami, and later still Senno Rikiu and Enshiu. So-ami was one of the greatest masters of landscape gardening, and in his quiet and dignified compositions one sees the hand that produced the delicate landscape paintings of misty hill and lake. Examples of his gardens exist to this day, the best known being that of the Silver Pavilion at Ginkakuji, which was laid out about the year 1480.

A hundred years later Enshiu was the founder of a new school, which afterwards became very popular. One of his greatest works was a palace garden near Kioto, through which flowed the river Katsura, and so highly esteemed was this garden that for one hundred and fifty years after his death not a stone or shrub was altered.

During the luxurious Tokugawa period it became the custom for the wealthy Daimios to have their gardens laid out by well-known

artists; and the art grew still more in importance, a modern style being introduced by Asagori Shimanosuke of Fushimi in the early part of the nineteenth century.

The training of the landscape gardener was long and arduous, for it was by no means the same thing to compose an actual landscape as to paint one. The novice was sent direct to nature to sketch and study natural forms, not, as in painting, from one point of view only, but so as to realise how a scene would appear from all sides.

In designing a garden the first step was a careful survey of the site; its drainage, levels, size, and shape had all to be taken into consideration. The aspect then was chosen, and this was generally south or south-east, so as to be sheltered from the cold west wind, though near Tokio a vista to the west was always left open commanding a view of Mount Fuji. Then the style of the garden had to be decided. Was it to be a hill garden or flat plain land? Was it to follow the "Rocky Ocean," the "Wide River," the "Mountain Torrent" or the "Lake Wave" style? The character of the surrounding country would

1. Deer (in lead on gold ground).

2. Biwa in the Waves (gold and shell on black ground).

3. Fukurokujiu (lead and shell on gold ground).

4. Storks and bamboo (in pearl and lead on gold ground).

A GROUP OF INRO BY KORIN

(*From the Collection of Mr M. Tomkinson*)

largely determine the answer to this question, for a garden was designed to fill harmoniously its place in the natural scene. The artist also, while endeavouring to obtain a result that would look well from any point, had to bear in mind that the best view of all should be from the house itself.

A striking characteristic of Japanese gardens is that water, in the form of cascade, lake, or stream, is almost universally present, its cool and refreshing properties being considered well-nigh indispensable.

The main levels fixed, the hills and valleys modelled, the next important feature consisted of the rocks and stones which represent the crags and precipices of nature. Great care is taken in the selection of these, which are termed the bones of the garden. Certain stones, which are highly valued are often brought great distances, the larger ones sometimes carefully split to render carriage more easy, and pieced together again on their arrival. Fancy prices were paid for such stones ; and, indeed, to such a height did this form of extravagance attain, that early in the nineteenth century an edict was issued limiting the price to a certain sum.

The size of the garden, which varied from about fifty square yards to a few acres, gave the scale of the stones, and these again in their turn fixed the size of the shrubs, the trees, the fences, and other furnishings of the garden. In a large garden there were no less than one hundred and thirty-eight of these stones, each with its special name and purpose assigned to it.

In the arrangement of the trees, shrubs, and flowers a regular or symmetrical arrangement was avoided, the growths and forms of nature were carefully followed, and the result made to appear as free and unstudied as possible. Contrasts of form and line, and of colour in the foliage, were sought after. No garden was deemed complete without maple-trees, so placed that the light of the setting sun would enhance the richness of its crimson leaves. Deciduous trees were not so largely used as evergreens on account of their bareness in winter; but exceptions were made in the case of the plum and the cherry, so highly prized for the beauty of their blossom.

Flowers were chiefly grouped round the house, and were sparingly distributed among the foliage; but here again we have exceptions in the case

of the iris and the lotus, which were used in large masses with gorgeous effect.

Miniature pagodas appeared among the trees in the larger gardens, little bridges crossed the streams, and large stone lanterns cast a dim and mysterious light over the scene when darkness had fallen.

But now let us turn to the sister art. The love of flowers has long been a characteristic of the Japanese people. As long ago as the ninth century the Emperor Saga held garden parties during the flowering of the cherry blossom, at which the literati of the day composed verses in honour of the flowers; and now, after the lapse of ten centuries, the transient glory of the cherry blossom is still a national festival, observed alike by the rich and the poor.

Nowhere but in Japan has the flower motive been so extensively used in art or with such grace and charm. The Japanese flower paintings stand in a class by themselves, beside which all others seem clumsy and coarse, alike in conception and execution, but it is in the applied arts that their fancy is allowed to run riot. In lacquer floral designs are wrought wonderfully

in gold or inlaid in mother-of-pearl; in metal they appear in chasing, embossing, inlaying, and many other forms; they form the chief decorations of pottery and porcelain; but it is perhaps in the textile fabrics of Japan, in the gorgeous silk brocades, that they are seen in their greatest glory.

This being so, need we be surprised that in Japan the arranging of living flowers has for hundreds of years been recognised as a fine art, has had its schools, its laws, and its traditions, and has numbered among its exponents such great artists as So-ami, Oguri Sotan, and Korin? The flower artist, they say, "must be thoroughly imbued with a sympathetic feeling for the character, habits, virtues, and weaknesses of the members of the floral kingdom from which he seeks his material, till he possesses the same love and tenderness for their qualities as for those of human beings."

And so to the arrangement of flowers the Japanese bring an enthusiasm, a delicacy, and a refinement of dainty pedantry that, even in its most stilted and artificial forms, is full of charm, for the spirit underlying the formality and giving life to the most mannered produc-

tions is this genuine and reverential love for the beauties of nature. It is related of Rikiu, the famous flower artist and philosopher, that he once observed a fence covered with a beautiful growth of convolvulus. After standing for a while rapt in admiration he plucked one flower and one leaf, which he carefully arranged in a vase. "Why so humble," asked his friends and pupils, "when the whole plant is there at your disposal?" "Nay," answered the master; "it is impossible to rival nature in magic of design, and so any artificial arrangement should be marked by modesty and simplicity. But even one leaf and one flower are sufficient to call for admiration."

The Japanese art of the arrangement of flowers deals not only with blooms but also with many non-flowering plants characterised by a graceful habit of growth. The effects aimed at are pre-eminently those of line and balance, colour being more or less subordinated to these qualities.

The earliest flower studies, placed as offerings before the shrines in the temples, followed a style of erect composition known as the Rikkwa school, and with their vertical central mass and

supporting side groups approached more nearly to symmetry than is usual in Japanese art.

In the later styles symmetry was carefully avoided, and, perhaps, to no department of art does the style of asymmetrical yet balanced composition seem more suited than to those delightful arrangements of freely growing natural forms.

The most popular school is that of Enshiu, which groups the essentials under three heads. First, the quality of giving feeling and expression to compositions, for the Japanese artist is no mere copyist of nature; each group must mean something, must convey some idea. Second, truth to nature in the sense of presenting correctly the style of growth of the plants used; and third, truth to nature in the strict observance of the laws of season and locality.

The different parts of the composition have each a special name, as also have many of the faults into which the novice is liable to fall.

Nagashi, the arrangement of long, streaming sprays on each side of a group, is, as approaching the symmetrical, especially to be avoided. "Window-making," the crossing of stalks in such a manner as to give the appearance of

A FLOWER COMPOSITION

loopholes, and "lattice-making," where the crossing suggests lattice-work, are both grave faults, as is also any suspicion of parallelism in the main lines.

It is not sufficient either that the finished study should look well from the front. It must bear the test of examination from all points of view.

There are also distinct rules regarding the vessels employed to hold the compositions. Sometimes beautifully wrought bowls of bronze are used, sometimes vessels of wood or porcelain, sometimes a simple wicker basket.

The shallow bronze bowl is the most usual, as in it little vices of wood may be conveniently fixed across to hold together the stems, and metal crabs, dragons, tortoises, and frogs are often used to hold the cuttings in position, and at the same time form part of the design. Sometimes the vessel is made in the shape of a boat, a style said to be first inaugurated by So-ami, and since forming a class of composition by itself.

A favourite combination is a rough wooden tub used for horses to drink from and a bronze horse's bit. Its use dates back to a time when a famous general of old, during one of the duller

intervals of a campaign, employed his leisure in composing a flower study, using as vessel and vice the only articles at his disposal.

Holders of bamboo are used in various forms, as many as forty-two different methods of cutting and notching the hollow stem being recognised. Some of the names of these are delightfully expressive—such as "lion's mouth," "singing mouth," "flute," "stork's neck," "conch shell," and, most imposing of all, "cascade-climbing-dragon's form."

The plants themselves are grouped in many grades. Seven—the chrysanthemum, the narcissus, the maple, the wisteria, and the evergreen rhodea—are of princely rank, and form a veritable aristocracy of flowers. The iris, also, is of equal rank with the foregoing, but, owing to its purple colour, must never be used at a wedding.

Then, again, within the same species, the flowers take rank according to their colour, in most cases the white bloom ranking highest. Among chrysanthemums, however, the yellow takes precedence, with the peach and cherry pale pink, and with the camellia and peony red.

Certain plants, also, must never be used, and

this "Index Expurgatorius" includes all strong-smelling or poisonous plants, and a long list comprising the aster, the poppy, the orchid, the rhododendron, and many others.

Male and female attributes are also applied to plants in many ways. The front of leaves is male, the back female; red, purple, pink, or variegated flowers are male; blue, yellow, and white female. So that a flower composition in Japan, apart from its intrinsic beauty, bears a wealth of symbolic meaning.

In all important rooms there is an ornamental alcove or recess, called the toko-no-ma, with raised floor polished and lacquered, and a handsome corner pillar of rare wood. On the back wall is hung the kakemono, or in some cases a pair, or set of three, and on the dais before it, or suspended from above, is placed the flower study. In this recess are displayed, one at a time, the choicest art treasures of the house, and in front of it is the place of the honoured guest.

There is an etiquette even in looking at flower studies, and in praising them only appropriate epithets should be used, always softly expressed. White flowers are "elegant," blue

"fine," red "charming," yellow "splendid," and purple "modest."

But the greatest compliment that can be paid to a guest on such an occasion is to ask him to make an extempore arrangement himself. And here the ceremonial is delightful in its graceful formality. The host brings a tray with vase, cut blooms and sprays, scissors, knife, and a little saw. If the vessel brought be a very valuable one the guest modestly protests that he can produce nothing worthy of so fine a setting, but, on being pressed by his host, should comply with his wishes. The host then removes the kakemono, for to allow it to remain would impose upon the artist the task of designing his group in harmony with it, and with the rest of the company withdraws to an adjoining room until, the work being completed, the guest summons them, having placed the scissors beside his composition as a silent request for the correction of its faults. When his host enters he apologises for the imperfections of his work, and begs that the whole may be removed. The host in his turn assures him that in beauty it is all that could be desired, and so the delicate interchange of compliments goes on.

Not the least attractive feature of this gentle art is the evanescent nature of its charms. The painter, the sculptor, the artist in lacquer or in metal, works for posterity: hundreds of years hence his fame may be greater far than it is to-day. But the artist in flowers can hope for no such permanence in his work, its creations are verily but "the lilies of a day," his modest task but to give sweetness and beauty to the passing hour.

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